

**CHALLENGES POSED BY TRADITIONAL ORDINATION PROCESSES FOR
FEMALE MINISTERS IN THE BLACK CHURCH AND AN EXPLORATION OF
ALTERNATIVES**

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ABSTRACT

CHALLENGES POSED BY TRADITIONAL ORDINATION PROCESSES FOR FEMALE MINISTERS IN THE BLACK CHURCH AND AN EXPLORATION OF ALTERNATIVES

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Female ministers continue to face many challenges in their attempts to become ordained. These challenges stem from various sources and are contributors to the formation of obstacles that result. Ordaining women has long been a controversial disposition across diverse denominational lines.

Jarena Lee, an African American Episcopalian (A.M.E.) lived during the 18th and 19th centuries and felt strongly that she was called by God to preach. “Go preach the Gospel” is what she professed to have heard from God.¹ She vigorously sought ordination in the A.M.E. Church but was denied on more than one occasion. Her plight was filled with torment and agony, so much so that she contemplated suicide. Jarena lived in a male-dominated society, where women were admonished to “stay in their place”. Jarena Lee’s call to preach was finally recognized in 2016 when she was posthumously ordained. She is now known as the “first woman preacher in the A.M.E. Church”.

1. Jarena Lee. *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account Her Call to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Pantianos Classics, 1836), 79.

Why is this still such an area of contention and controversy? It is not a linear challenge. I propose that it is multi-dimensional in nature and that there are multiple contributing factors that result in the formation of obstacles for the female ordination seekers. It is agreed that we continue to live in a patriarchal society, where male preachers are in power and have control and influence over who gets ordained and who doesn't. Men remain in the seat of power in churches. I propose that male preacher dominance (The Good Ole Boys' Club) is not the only creator of obstacles for women seeking ordination.

In addition, I maintain that the following factors contribute to conditions that challenge female ministers' goals of ordination. I propose that the following are factors to be considered: (a) females in the congregation; (b) other female ministers; (c) Biblical interpretation; (d) personal subjectivity; (e) church politics; (f) doctrinal rules, regulations and practices; (g) tradition; (h) societal beliefs and cultures; (i) available resources and support. It is my contention that parallels will be found among my presumptions, the findings from the Questionnaires, and research of the literature.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to female ministers of all denominations, but, especially to Black female ministers in the Black Church, where the roadblocks to Ordination often appears to be insurmountable. To those who believe that they have been called by God to preach, but, have been denied that right by humankind to do so for any number of reasons. This dedication is to those female ministers who are already ordained, as well as, to those seeking ordination. I encourage you to hold dear and indoctrinate into your very spirits, Galatians 3:28, “There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Jesus Christ” (NRSV).

Let these words serve as a reminder that, in God, there is no bias or gender preference for who can preach the Gospel. When God calls you, that means that you have received permission from the ultimate authority source. With conviction and determination, pick up your Cross and follow the path that God has laid before you. Go without fear, without doubt, either that which has been instilled by self or by others. May God Bless and continue to guide you as you journey forth in your calling.

With the love of Christ,

Veronica L. Price

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Hazel Stephens (Sister)
Evelyn Jenkins (Sister)

Glossary

Answering God's Call: Acknowledgement and acceptance of the conviction of God's claim on one's life (Veronica Price)

Apocrypha: Writings or statements of dubious authenticity; early Christian writings not part of the Biblical canon (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Apostolic: Of, or relating to, or conforming to the teachings of the Apostles (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Catechism: A summary of the principles of Christian religion in the form of questions and answers, used for the instruction of Christians (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Christian: One who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Christianity: A religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (Merriam Webster Dictionary)

Denominational: A religious organization whose congregations are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

God's Calling: The conviction of God's claim on one's life which leads to a sense of focused identity and integration of the self for action, harnessed energies, and heightened creativity (James Earle Massey)

Good Ole Boys: Intolerant attitudes and a strong sense of fellowship with and loyalty to other members of his peer group (Vocabulary.com)

Imago Dei: A Latin term, concept and theological doctrine in Judaism, Christianity, and Sufism of Islam which asserts that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. It is rooted in Genesis 1:27 (PBS.org.)

Laying on of Hands: The act of laying hands usually on a person's head to confer a spiritual blessing (as in Christian ordination, confirmation, or faith healing) (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Non-denominational: Not restricted to a religious denomination (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Non-Traditional Ordination Process: (See Figure 5)

Obstacle: Something that impedes progress or achievement (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Ordain: To establish or order by appointment, decree, or law (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Ordination:

Black Church's Definition: The culmination of meeting requirements (may include

but are not limited to formal education i.e. MDiv degree, the accumulation of experience as a licensed minister) established by the Church that usually ends in a ceremony that proclaims the candidate a “Reverend” and authorized to preach the Gospel (Veronica Price, see Figure 4)

Biblical Definition: The Bible does not speak of or reference ordination or an ordination process (Veronica Price)

My Definition: The public recognition that one has been called by God to preach the Gospel (Veronica Price, see Figure 5)

Sacerdotal: Relating to or denoting a doctrine which ascribes sacrificial functions and spiritual or supernatural powers to ordained clergy (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Segregation: The separation or isolation of a race, class, gender, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

The Black Church: The Black church is defined as, Protestant churches that have predominantly Black congregations; the denominations include, but are not limited to the following: African Methodist Episcopalian (A.M.E.), A.M.E Zion, Baptist (American, National Full Gospel, Progressive, Pentecostal, Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C.) and the Church of Christ (Vanessa Taylor)

Traditional Ordination Process: (See Robert J. Sargent, Chapter 1, pg. 17 and Figure 4)

Abbreviations

- A.M.E.** African Methodist Episcopalian
- C.O.G.I.C.** Church of God in Christ
- I.A.W.M.** International Association of Women Ministries
- I.S.B.E.** International Standard Bible Encyclopedias
- I.R.B.** Institutional Review Board
- L.A.C.** Local Advisory Committee
- N.A.A.C.P** National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- N.T.O.** Non-Traditional Ordination
- N.W.M.** Network of Women Ministries
- N.Y.O.** Not Yet Ordained
- T.O.** Traditional Ordination
- U.L.C.** Universal Life Church
- W.O.C.I.M.** Women of Color in Ministry

Chapter 1 Introduction

The purpose of this project is to identify the obstacles and roadblocks that impede, hinder, block or discourage the pursuit of ordination by African American female ministers in the Black Church. For the sake of this project, Vanessa Taylor's definition¹ will be used:

The Black church is defined as, Protestant churches that have predominantly Black congregations. More specifically, the Black church is both a specific religious culture and a socio-religious force that has shaped posttest movements, such as, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s." More specifically, the denominations include, but are not limited to the following: African Methodist Episcopalian (A.M.E.), A.M.E Zion, Baptist (American, National Full Gospel, Progressive, Pentecostal, Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C.) and the Church of Christ (Holiness).

I have been a registered nurse for over 40 years. I can attest that, in the medical field, it is widely known that a condition or illness can be more effectively treated if the cause of that condition or illness is known. The best medication or treatment can be utilized if you know what the specific causative germ or organism. There is an inference for the selection of the topic chosen for this project. I propose that if obstacles, that stand in the way of female ordination, can be identified more specifically, effective plans to remedy them can be developed, planned and implemented.

This issue is not a new one, nor is it relegated to a single denomination. Ordaining women has long been a controversial subject matter, across diverse denominational lines. The ordination of women dates back to the 19th century. The testimonies of Black female women attest to the fact that it has been an uphill climb ever since. Feminist Christianity

1. Vanessa Taylor, "The Black Church: It's Impact on Black Culture", <http://www.thoughtco.com/meaning-of-the-term-black-church-4154347>

is the embodied belief that the Christian tradition contains within it, alongside the story of repression and denial of women, the power of transformation that is essential to make the world a place where women can live and thrive. These theologians have led the charge to ensure justice for female ministers' and in creating a space for their voices to be heard.

Karen Baker-Fletcher is one such Theologian. In her work on Anna Julia Cooper, she argues Black women were a starting point of a race of regeneration.² Baker-Fletcher calls for an "ethic of standing".³ She considers the ordination of Black women as such.⁴ I agree with Baker-Fletcher's belief that you cannot separate social justice for ministers from "internal congregational concerns".

Accordingly, Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu say, "Without memory, we have no future. Without seeing our past, we cannot envision our future".⁵ This we have learned painfully again and again. The stories of women's contributions to Christianity has been forgotten, lost, distorted and belittled. We have been forced to search out, reconstruct and defend against those who say that women made no significant contribution".⁶

2. Karen Baker-Fletcher. *A Singing Something: Womanist Reflections on Anna Julia Cooper*. (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 45.

3. Ibid., 47

4. Ibid.

5. Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, eds. *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views*. (Woodstock: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2010)

6. Ibid., 177

The story of Jarena Lee⁷ appropriately represents the plights of Black female preachers, past and present who have been and/or continue to be victims of injustices perpetrated by the church on their rights to be ordained. She lived during the 18th and 19th centuries. Jarena felt strongly that she was called by God to preach. “Go preach the Gospel” is what she professed to have heard from God. She doggedly sought ordination in the African Methodist Episcopalian church but was denied on more than one occasion. Her plight was filled with torment and agony, so much so that she contemplated committing suicide. Jarena lived in a male-dominated society, where women were admonished to “stay in their place”. The term “called” in this paper will be used as defined by James Earle Massey, “the conviction of God’s claim on one’s life which leads to a sense of focused identity and integration of the self for action, harnessed energies, and heightened creativity.”⁸ Jarena Lee’s call to preach was finally recognized in 2016 when she was posthumously ordained. She is now known as the “first woman preacher in the A.M.E. Church”. Jarena Lee was not alone in her quest to become an acknowledged preacher.

Zikmund⁹ believes that the most significant event in 20th century-American Protestant Churches has been the entry of tens of thousands of women into the church’s ordained ministry. She poses very valid questions that impact female ministers; such as:

7. Jarena Lee. *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Pantianos Classics, 1836), 79.

8. James Earle Massey. *The Burdensome Joy of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 25

9. Barbara Zikmund and Brown, et al. *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*. (Louisville Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

How are these women's experiences as ministers different from those of their male counterparts? What are their callings and careers like? What are their prospects for employment, income, and satisfaction?

Gail Wallace¹⁰ shared similar plights of several women who took on the challenges of being called and answering God's call to preach. Julia A. J. Foote (1823-1900) was the daughter of former slaves. She began preaching at the age of 15 without the support of her parents, her husband, and her pastor. She spoke out against racism and sexism. It is noted that she became the first ordained female deacon and the second ordained Elder in the A.M.E. Zion Church. She argued that her call came from God, therefore, what man had to say was irrelevant because she answered to a higher calling. Amanda Berry Smith (1837-1915) was born a slave in Maryland. While she preached, she was referred to as an Evangelist. Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), born a slave, is probably one of the most well-known women who, against all odds became one the most celebrated and controversial itinerant preachers of her era.

The struggle continues despite the fact, that in most Black churches, women make up the largest percentage of congregations and are most vested in the operation and workings of the church. The stories of Black female ministers are overwhelming. The sheer number of these stories are appalling. Throughout the writing of this paper, I have had to pause and remind myself that I was writing about "Christians," churches, pastors, ministers, and church leadership. People who are supposed to be representative of God

10. Gail Wallace, 5 Black Women in History Every Egalitarian Should Know. <https://juniaproject.com/5-black-women-every-egalitarian-should-know/>

and people who are made in God's own image. People whose behaviors reflect that God is not even in the picture.

Gilbert¹¹ offers that African-American women have encountered and been confronted by related injustices since the slavery era. This is ironic since it is a known fact that African-American women make up more than 70% of the active membership of generally any Black congregation.¹² I concur with his belief that African-American women are among the most religiously committed of the Black church demographic. Yet, there is still a demonstration of surprise when a woman mentions that God has called her to preach. He acknowledges what we already know and experience, pulpits remain male-dominated spaces.

In Bernhard's article¹³, she shares a story about Esther Holimon, a minister in a Washington, DC church. She revealed that she had been preaching for several years but had not yet been ordained. When she mentioned ordination to her pastor, she said that he looked at her, scratched his head, chuckled and replied, "You don't really want me to be ordained, do you?" Holimon went on to tell of the repercussions exacted on male ministers who took part in the ordination of the one Black woman that had been ordained.

11. Kenyatta Gilbert R., *Hidden Figures: How Black Women Preachers Spoke Truth to power*. <https://theconversation.com/hidden-figures-how-black-women-preachers-spoke-truth-to-power-73185>.

12. Ibid.

13. Marianne Bernhard, "Black Baptist Women Seeking Ordination Find Discrimination," June 21, 1981. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/198106/12/black-baptist-women-seeking-ordination-find-discrimination/0013d6be-2a12-46a2-a994-5c6...>

She reported that those Black males were expelled from that denominational conference. The story ends with her leaving that denomination and joining another, where she almost immediately, started ordination proceedings.

Even as they gathered to mourn and celebrate the extraordinary life of the great Aretha Franklin, the funeral service unveiled the biases that continue to plague female ministers in the Black church. Rev. Jasper Williams delivered Aretha's eulogy. Outrage was expressed about the sexist and misogynist remarks made during his delivery. Rev. Barbara Reynold said¹⁴, "Women are hurting about this issue". William's expressions were said to have, for many Black women, reopened wounds and blatantly reminded them that the Black churches remain male-dominated institutions.

Cleophus LaRue¹⁵ stated that "When a woman thought she heard the call and had the guts to come forward, she was put in her place by the pastor in front of the entire congregation". She shared that her pastor discouraged her and any other women from coming forward and revealing that they had been called by God.

Rev. Maidstone Mulenga¹⁶, Communications Director for the United Methodist Church Council of Bishops also attended Aretha's home going service. Mulenga's

14. Corey Williams, For Black Women at Church, It's More Than the Aretha Eulogy-Religion News. <https://religionnews.com/2018/09/09/for-black-women-at-church-its-more-than-the-aretha-eulogy/>

15. Cleophus J. LaRue. ed., This is My Story: Testimonies and Sermons of Black Women in Ministry (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989): 1.

16. Corey Williams, For Black Women at Church, It's More Than the Aretha Eulogy-Religion News. <https://religionnews.com/2018/09/09/for-black-women-at-church-its-more-than-the-aretha-eulogy/>

response to the all-male leadership is that having only men in leadership and pastoral roles are part of the theology taught in some churches. He expressed that this type of teaching is responsible for the resistance of female preachers. Mulenga said that Bishop Latrelle Easterling, is the Baltimore-Washington Conference leader and she exhorts that even if women do become ordained, they are required to work twice as hard as her Black male counterpart.

Why is this still such an area of contention and controversy? It is not a linear challenge. My belief is that it is multi-dimensional in nature and there are multiple contributing factors that result in the formation of obstacles for the female ordination seekers. We continue to live in a patriarchal society, where male preachers are in power and have control and influence over who gets ordained and who doesn't. Female ministers should stay in their place and the pulpit is not one of those places. I propose that male preacher dominance (The Good Ole Boys' Club) is not the only creator of obstacles for women seeking ordination.

I maintain that the following factors contribute to conditions that challenge female ministers' goals of ordination. My hunch is that the following are factors to be considered: (a) females in the congregation continue to hold to a view that women out not to be ordained; (b) other female ministers; (c) Biblical interpretation; (d) personal subjectivity; (e) church politics; (f) doctrinal rules, regulations, and practices; (g) tradition; (h) societal beliefs and cultures; (i) available resources and support. It is my belief that there will be parallels between my hypotheses and the data that will be collected from the research methods that will be used in this project. One of my objectives is to reveal additional challenges by way of the questionnaire responses of the

six participants chosen for this project. The desired outcome for this project is that further research in the area will be attempted and that it will provide a basis upon which successful resolutions will be considered and implemented.

To help me get a better perspective of the subject matter, I felt that it would be beneficial to the development of this paper, to take both a retrospective and an introspective review of my own Christian journey and church experience. I reflect on the sentiments of Marjorie Proctor-Smith who remind us that we must remember our past so that we can envision our future.¹⁷ The incorporation of my own personal story makes me feel inclusive in the history of Black women's lives and church experiences. It also made me understand that I was not an outsider looking in, but rather, a part of the fabric that was exposed to the harsh winds and devastation exacted by the injustices that continue to plague Black women's leadership in Church life. It is even more significant to me, now that I am in the ranks of those who continue the fight to have a voice in church leadership, for now, I too, am a Black female minister.

17. Marjorie Proctor-Smith, *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views*. "The Ones Who've Gone Before Us": The Future of Feminist Artistic and Liturgical Life. (Woodstock: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2010), 222.

Personal Reflections: My Christian Journey and Church Experience

My Christian journey reads like a novel. This novel is comprised of many chapters, some long, some short, some finite and some ongoing. They encompass countless incidents and occurrences that have both impacted the formation and transformations of my life. They have contributed greatly to the person that I am today. They have played an integral part and a significant role in the shaping of my overall identity as a Christian, as well as, shaping my attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and adoptions. My story within these chapters have and continue to capture my emotions, goals, and ambitions. They are filled with mystery, positives and negatives, joy and pain, successes and failures and encounters with others. These stories have evolved from a vast array of experiences that have spanned over seven decades.

The stories have revealed and continue to illuminate the many bends and turns that my life has taken and continues to take. Some of these shifts were anticipated and some unexpected. Every twist and every turn of my very existence is captured in my life's novel even those that have not yet been experienced.

It is my belief that my Christian journey is the foundation upon which my ministerial experience is built. The integration of both play a vital role in the formation of my Pastoral identity. My religious beliefs and practices began to develop when I was four years old. That was my first introduction to church and the life of the church. At that age, I remember being taken to church by my grandmother, grandfather or both. We were members of a Baptist church. At that age, I did not know the aspects of Baptist beliefs and practices. I was not aware that Baptist doctrine included the beliefs grounded in authoritativeness and infallibility the Holy Scriptures, one God, the separation of church

and state, the Lord's Supper, Baptism by immersion, Priesthood of believers and perseverance of the believer.

However, over the years, as I grew in my faith and understanding, I adopted these beliefs and practices as my own. In alignment with the belief mentioned above, I accepted that Jesus Christ was the only way to Salvation and to Heaven. In 1960, at the age of twelve, while at summer camp, I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. While I was not knowledgeable about what it all meant, I was very observant as to what was going on in the church. I observed my Grandmother working in the church, preparing meals and serving others. I watched other women in their white uniforms, ushers, missionaries, evangelists, Sunday School teachers and nurses, serving. However, I don't recall there being any female preachers.

I remember how I felt when worship was taking place, mostly through the music. I can recall "feeling" the music and enjoying it. I remember seeing others in the church dancing, waving their hands, shouting and crying. I remember seeing people faint or pass out onto the floor. When they passed out, I remember seeing the women in white cover them with white sheets. I have since learned that I was witnessing women's leadership in the church. Why didn't I see female preachers? Perhaps it was because of the "times". Men and women had distinct assigned roles in the home and church.

As I mentioned previously, I was raised by my grandparents. I recollect that my sisters and I were responsible for washing dishes and most of the house chores. We had to sew, mend clothes and cook. My brothers were not allowed to wash dishes, they were responsible for taking out the garbage and cleaning the front and back yards and cleaning the basement. While we were assigned chores by my grandmother, she was just carrying

out “directions/instructions/orders” of my grandfather. I considered these practices to be traditional because they had been assigned and implemented the same over generations, not just in my family, but in my African America cultural. My grandfather was the primary breadwinner. He went to work and brought home the money every Friday. He gave it to my grandmother who managed the household budget. She would give him an allowance for the week. The rest of the money was used to buy groceries, pay bills and the rest of the family expenses, which included recreational activities for the family.

Haines¹⁸ identifies and supports that behavior as “Cultural Obstacles”. She agrees that these obstacles contribute to the development of prejudices and bias against women. They include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The male dominant/patriarchal tradition
- The Bible (Old and New Testament) were written against the background of male dominant/patriarchal societies
- Christianity is divided today on the role of women in the home, society and the church
- Closed minds among fundamentalists and evangelicals who accept the inerrancy of the scriptures and make their views known through the saturation of related articles, books and preaching on TV and radio
- The widespread concept that women are inferior to men

Cleophus LaRue¹⁹ concurs that cultural influences impact a woman’s opportunity for ordination. He expressed that, “not only did the ordination of women violate our sociocultural mores, it was also, we believed clearly forbidden in the scriptures.”

18. Haines, Lee M, “Women in Ministry: Challenging the Cultural Obstacles.” <https://resources.wesleyan.org/wp-content/uploads/Women-in-Ministry-Cultural-Obstacles.pdf> (Accessed 9/19/2018)

19. Cleophus J. LaRue. ed., *This is My Story: Testimonies and Sermons of Black Women in Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989): 1.

My grandmother was responsible for the cooking, washing, and ironing for the entire family. When we were old enough her household responsibilities would be shared by me and my sisters. It still amazes me when I recollect, that she would even iron all the bedsheets and my grandfather's underwear. She would prepare his meal plates first and then she would prepare ours. She would prepare her plate after she completed everyone else's. I now know that these practices were a form of sexism, I believe that my grandparents and others were ignorant of the fact that they were perpetuating and contributing to this bias.

In high school, girls' curriculum included "home economics", ironing, cooking, and sewing. The boys were required to take "shop" which included carpentry and auto repair. We were all being groomed to take our assigned places in society. My observations and witnesses have convinced me that sexism was indeed a deliberate societal intention. It was pervasive and practiced throughout the lives that we were destined to live. It helped to form the foundation of women's roles in the home, in education, and yes, even in the church. I believe that biblical interpretation was primarily responsible and the basis for these distinctions among men and women. Further, in many instances, these interpretations are used to dictate take who, what and when can experience ordination and its process.

My ordination theory is based on my own biblical interpretation (see Figure 5). I believe that there are those who are called out, by God, for a divine purpose (Matthew

16:18). This could apply to anyone. I concur with Ephesians 4:11, “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. I interpret this to mean that God can call anyone, therefore, anyone can carry out the duties the responsibilities of named titles, including Pastors and preachers, because everyone has an opportunity, a choice to answer that call. Also, the answer to this question can be inferred based on the previous discussion about who the church is obligated to serve. I believe that male and female, alike, can be called to preach. This contention will be discussed further and in more detail in Chapter 2.

Julia Foote sums it up best for me and I align myself with her concept about being ordained. Julia A. J. Foote²⁰ lived between 1823 and 1900. She was the daughter of former slaves. She began preaching at the age of 15 without the support of her parents, her husband, and her pastor. She became a prolific preacher, speaking in New York, New England, the Mid-Atlantic States, Michigan, Ohio, and Canada. She spoke out against racism and sexism. It is noted that she became the first ordained female deacon and the second ordained Elder in the A.M.E. Zion Church. She argued that her call came from God, therefore, what man had to say was irrelevant because she answered to a higher calling.

20. Williams L. Andrews, ed. *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), 163-168.

My Pathway to Ordination

In 2014, I was a member of a newly transplanted church, Independent Church. Even though the church was identified as independent, it had an American Baptist affiliation. After one year of membership, I was ordained, as a Deacon, not a Deaconess, by the Senior Pastor of that church. The Pastor was described as a progressive thinker, in terms of gender. He believed that men and women should serve in an equal capacity in the church. I served four years in that capacity before I finally answered God's call to preach with the spiritual guidance of the Pastor. He assigned me to preach my initial sermon on December 14, 2014, after which time I was "licensed" to preach. I was licensed, but not yet ordained.

Since joining that church, located in, Brooklyn NY, I relocated back to Camden, NJ. I tried to continue membership, despite the travel distance. However, the long commute started to take its toll on my physical health. I prayed about the situation and believed that I was led to cease membership with that church and to seek one that was closer to my new location. Ironically, after leaving the church in Brooklyn (2015), I heard from the Holy Spirit who directed me back to NY, to a Baptist church in Queens, NY. No one was more surprised than me, but I strongly believe that "obedience is better than sacrifice" (I Samuel 15:22). Because of this Divine instruction, I rented a room in Brooklyn, attended, and eventually joined the Church in Queens in 2016.

James B. Barnwell, III was the Senior Pastor at that church in Queens. He was also a respected friend. Pastor Barnwell was a progressive thinker and had no problem with women being on the pulpit. When I joined, he had already appointed two female preachers. He assigned them as Associate Ministers (ordained). Pastor Barnwell recognized and

respected my call from God, as well as, my acceptance of that call. Based on this recognition, he re-licensed me to preach in the Baptist denomination and arranged for me to start “Catechism” with a well-known Baptist Minister.

My Personal Ordination Process

What is “Catechism”? It is the process by which one is prepared for the ordination journey in the Baptist tradition. I attended weekly classes, during which I studied and was prepped on the material needed for the examination by a panel of ministers. Outside study was also necessary because there was an exorbitant amount of information that had to be learned. Catechism was a mandatory requirement which had to be met before I could be ordained in the Baptist church. The materials included learning the 66 books of the Bible. I not only had to be able to recite each book, in order from the Old to the New Testament but had to know the specific category to which it belonged. The categories were as follows:

Old Testament.

- The Law, Torah, The Pentateuch
- The Historical Books of the Old Testament
- The Poetical Books
- The Major Prophetical Books
- The Minor Prophetical Books

The New Testament

- The Gospels
- The Historical Book of the New Testament
- The Pauline Letters
- General Epistles
- Prophetical Book of the New Testament

In addition, I was required to know specific information and the associated scriptures that include, but not limited to: Baptism, the authority of the church, the Virgin Birth, Baptist church history, Roles of the pastor, deacon, trustee, purposes of the church, the attributes of God, the 20 articles of faith, Baptist theology, the Lord's Supper, the concepts of Adoption, Sanctification, Justification, Propitiation, the ultimate purpose of the incarnation et al. In addition, a Creedal statement had to be written and submitted.

I am not opposed to the requirement to know any of the above knowledge. My issue is not with "ordination", it is the "ordination process with which I take issue. Again, I am in total agreement with Julia Foote's understanding and adoption. To reiterate, she argued that her call came from God, therefore, what man had to say was irrelevant because she answered to a higher calling. I am pro-education, without a doubt, but believe that it should not be used as a determinant of who will be granted the right to preach, once God has called and one has answered that call. I believe that the right belongs to God and to God alone. I do believe that I am responsible to provide education, guidance, instruction, and support for those who confess and profess their calling. Further, I believe that these elements should be intentional and ongoing.

My premise is based on Jesus' selection and appointment of the 12 disciples (Like 6:13). Scripture does not support that he tested any one of them before he selected them. He simply chose them, and the education followed. I am in no way claiming to be Jesus or to have his insight, but I have chosen to follow his model. In addition, I do not believe that I have the right to question anybody's belief that they have been called by God.

The Traditional Ordination Process (Figure 4)

Robert J. Sargent provides²¹ a description of the typical Baptist ordination process. I have purposely chosen the Baptist process because it most closely mirrors my own personal process. In addition, it best demonstrates my belief that there is a difference between God's selection and that of man. It is noted, in his description of the process, there is a consistent reference to the candidate as "man".

A man who is to be ordained has acknowledged his surrender to a divine call and his desire to preach the Gospel. He has passed through a period of Bible training and has gained some practical experience along the way. He is judged by others and now ready to be ordained. An ordination council, comprising several ordained ministers is called for. These ministers privately interrogate the candidate by asking him questions relating to his call, his character, his qualifications, and his doctrine. Then having judged the man to be suitably qualified, the council reports its findings and recommendation to the church. As a matter of formal business, a vote to proceed with the candidate's ordination is taken.

The ordination service itself is usually a very special meeting. Often conducted in the presence of distinguished guests. The candidate may undergo some additional public questioning, and he and his wife are usually asked to give their testimonies. A charge is preached by one of the pastors. Then the candidate is asked to kneel at the front of the meeting while the preachers of the ordination council gather around him, lay hands on him, and pray for him. The candidate arises...as an ordained minister of the Gospel. Most Baptist view ordination as a credentialing or an investiture of sorts, whereby, a man is accorded the status of an ordained minister and admitted into the ranks of the ministry.

It is easy to see how the ordination process described above, in and of itself, is embedded with obstacles for anyone seeking man's ordination, especially Black female ministers. Sargent describes it in a distinct gendered manner. It clearly omits the possibility of a female candidate. The process as described by him is filled with subjective and biased language. For example, he stated that the candidate will be

21. Robert Sargent, Ordination: A Protestant Stronghold Among Baptist Churches. www.tbaptist.com/clientimages/48350/challengerarticles/2010-07%20%20ordination.pdf

“judged” and “interrogated”. These words hold negative connotations. I question, why does the candidate need man’s permission to do what God has already called you to do? The process almost seems like a contradiction or at the very least a diminishment of God’s divine calling. After all, what higher credentials can one receive than the call of God to preach the Gospel?

I recognize that the Baptist Denomination ordination process does not stand alone in its bias and sexism. It is believed by many to be among the least receptive of female ministers in its pulpits.

Non-Traditional Ordination Processes (Figure 5)

The Universal Life Church

This paper has demonstrated that there is unquestionable dissatisfaction with traditional ordination processes by Black women. The dissatisfaction, in many instances, is associated with obstacles posed by sexism, oppression, exclusion, abuse of pastoral power, etc. One of the goals of this paper was to explore options or alternatives to traditional processes. I hope to accomplish this goal in this section of the paper. I must preface this segment by saying that I do not necessarily agree with the alternative presented, it is just that, an option. I acknowledge that they may even be controversial, but, yet they are options.

The invention of the internet has opened many doors to opportunities for many avenues of life. Online ordination is one of those opportunities. The Universal Life Church²² (U.L.C.) offers one such choice. U.L.C. is a non-denominational religious

22. The Universal Life Church (U.L.C), www.themonastery.org/ordination.

organization that whose foundation is built on “inclusivity”. They embrace people from all walks of life, regardless of religion, sexual orientation, gender, race, ethnicity or other defining characteristics. They are internationally known and regard themselves as “champions” of religious freedom, social justice, and spiritual expression. They are not committed to any one denomination over the other. U.L.C. boasts legal ordination for over 20 million ministers worldwide. Some of their most famous ministers are Conan O'Brien, Stephen Colbert, Dwayne “the Rock” Johnson, Richard Branson, Lady Gaga and Paul McCartney.²³

I was somewhat caught off guard when they included servicing those who worship one God or multiple gods. It appears that U.L.C. is a one-stop shop for the religious community. Then I had to catch myself and acknowledge my own bias because lifelong, I have been a worshipper of only one God (careful). They will teach people how to perform typical services, such as performing weddings, officiating funeral, Baptisms and any other ministerial activity. In addition, they will provide the resources necessary to run a church. They promote the provision of resource guides to aide in the teaching of any ministerial event. They will even help people to start a church.

One of U.L.C.'s offers is the ordaining of ministers. As previously mentioned, they have ordained millions of ministers all over the world. They do not have set requirements or prerequisites and do not distinguish between backgrounds or belief systems. They do not require years of training or expensive courses in order to ordain someone. The ordination is done online, and it is free, no charge. They believe that all people are naturally endowed with the right to control their own spiritual life and that all

23. Ibid.

those who feel so-called should have access to ordination. They are committed to the “community of ministers”. I questioned the “so-called” meaning. I support those who believe that they have been called by God and question who U.L.C. is referencing when they say “so-called”, by whom?

I recognized that as I was reading about U.L.C., I was riveted with many questions. Also, I found my own biases and criticisms surfacing, making comparisons with my own beliefs and practices. Never the less, I found portions of ULC offerings refreshing. I was most impressed with their philosophy of inclusivity. They addressed some of the very concerns that prevent or inhibit female minister’s place in traditional churches.

Ida B. Robinson

Ida B. Robinson²⁴ was a Pentecostal preacher who lived between 1891 and 1946. She introduced another option to the traditional ordination process. She paved the way for Pentecostal women to preach. She was the first American woman to start a denomination to ordain women. Ida was permitted to preach in her church by her male pastor. However, when she preached, the church grew. Apparently, this caused conflict in the church and resulted in her leaving. It was not until she left that church and joined the United Holy Church of America that she was consecrated to the ministry through ordination. She then became the pastor of a small church but felt that she was held back because she was a woman.

24. Tamara Lynn Kraft. “*Ida B. Robinson-The Woman Preacher Who Ordained Women*,” Word Sharpeners March 18, 2016. women (Accessed 9/19/2018).

Ida believed that she could hear from God through visions and dreams when she fasted and prayed. On one such occasion, she received a revelation from God telling her that she would be used to free or liberate woman. As a result, she was led to start a new denominational organization called Mount Sinai Holy Church. This church was dedicated to ordaining women. Over the years the church has had 4 female Bishops and over 117 churches under its umbrella. Most of these churches are pastored by women.²⁵

This story represents yet another alternative to traditional ordination and its processes. I contemplated following in the footsteps of Ida B. Robinson. I too have planted a new church, Agape Christian Liberation Ministries and am now considering the incorporation of female ministers as part of dedicated service. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the thought came to me to do so after I had ordained two female ministers. I was inspired by the comments of my Pastor, James B. Barnwell, III, who also delivered the pastoral message at the ordination service.

Agape Christian Liberation Ministries: A Newly Planted Church

I live in Camden, NJ, one of the poorest and most crime-ridden communities in America. Most of the people that live in this community are impoverished, many are homeless and are substance abusers. Health is an issue among many of its residents. This is because many do not follow up with medical appointments on a regular basis. Medical attention is only sought if pain, infection, an emergency or some other acute situation has occurred. Hopelessness and despair abound. I am sympathetic to the plights of these people.

25. Ibid.

I can remember Camden many years ago. I was born and raised in Camden. During that time, it was a very vibrant place, full of life and hope. Neighborhoods looked beautiful. Flowers and trees adorned the community. Work was abundant and people appeared to enjoy life. However, the community fell into decay after the factories and major businesses moved out of Camden and years of mismanagement ensued by corrupt politicians.

This community is fertile ground for the development of effective ministries. There are several churches in Camden, however, I am not knowledgeable about who they are or how they function. One of my goals would be to survey each one and determine their function and offering. The ministerial goal may be to form a coalition of the existing churches so that the efforts are more focused and overlapping can be reorganized. Perhaps this would develop a more effective and efficient ministry for the people of Camden.

My Vision for a Community Based Ministry: A Ministry of Inclusion

I envision a ministry that is comprehensive in nature, recognizing the importance of inclusion and promoted justice for all. One that addresses the basic physical, psychological, health care, educational, social and spiritual needs of the people. Pastoral care and counseling are needed services that include efforts to get people employed, build self-esteem and give people hope. Music would play a major role in this ministry and would be different genres of music to appeal to the different age groups of the community. I believe that a youth ministry is necessary. Programs would be developed to involve and engage the children because they are at the greatest risk of loss. Usually, the parents of the children are the most difficult to engage. Experience and observation

have shown me that the parents would ensure that their children participate. However, the parents themselves are usually the hardest group to engage in participation. This lack of participation is often due to substance abuse.

Agape Christian Liberation Ministries

“THE LOGO”



Careful consideration and thought were given to the creation of the LOGO. My goal was to create a logo that was representative of my church and its mission. I wanted people to see themselves represented in the image. I wanted the LOGO to advocacy against racism, poverty, injustice in any form, sexism, gender bias, and other social ills. The red heart signifies God’s love for all of us sinners. The Cross reminds us that Jesus is at the center of the Church’s mission and that Christ was crucified there so that we all have an opportunity for Salvation from our sins. The scale represents the justice that all are entitled to because we are “Imago Dei”, made in the image of God.

The Mission of Agape Christian Liberation Ministries

The commitment to social justice and equality is extremely important to me. I believe that a church has a commitment and obligation to serve beyond the four walls of the church. Help meet the needs of the homeless, the hungry and to advocate against criminal injustices. In Matthew 25:40 Jesus admonishes that “In as much as you have done unto the least of these, you have done it unto me”. It is believed by some scholars that Jesus was referencing only persecuted Christians, missionaries, Apostles and the like. However, I believe that this text has implications for the world. It is a reminder of our

obligations for the world and all who live in it. In John 3:16, the writer says, “That for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever, believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”. In the latter verse, God does not exclude anyone, He said “the world”.

In addition, I firmly support the belief that the church should be a community activist. Through this activism, there are multiple opportunities for evangelism and the recruitment of others to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and a wonderful opportunity to teach others about God and to fulfill Jesus’ requirement of “The Great Commission” (Matthew 16-20).

Agape Christian Liberation Ministries Areas of Ministry Focus

The overall goal is to empower Camden residents to give them a voice so that they feel comfortable and free to speak up about matters which are unethical and with which they are not pleased; to speak up in a way that will net positive results; to feel good about themselves (holistically) physically, spiritually, emotional, psychologically educationally (formal and informal); and to help residents feel good or better about themselves, increase self-esteem and self-worth. Below is an outline of some aspects of ministry:

Civic Education

Voter Registration

Political Interfacing

Collaboration with local Politicians to remedy identified concerns

Interface and collaborate with local community-based organizations such as the NAACP

Employment

Collaborate with local businesses to provide employment opportunities for Camden residents

Prison Ministry

Focus on activist actions to allow Felons the right to vote (including absentee voting)

Spiritual Education and Support

Prayer Line

Bible Study

Minister through music (all genres)

Collaborations with other community churches

Pastoral Counseling

Medical Intervention and Teaching

Medical Assessment

Blood Pressure Monitoring

Collaboration with community medical entities to provide services for the uninsured

Mentorship Program for Youth

Etiquette

Resume Preparation

Recreational Program (including exercise)

Nutrition Counseling (parents included)

Education

Collaboration with local education entities in the community

Focus on teaching Spanish and English (currently a dividing variable in the community)

Provision of free

Clothing

Hair Care

Hair Cuts

Collaborations with local vendors, barbers, and hairdressers to provide these services

Self-Help

Development of a resource guide that will contain information on topics of concern and corresponding contact information (addresses and phone numbers)

Agape Christian Liberation Ministries Ordination Program (Figure 5)

The Ordination Service



Order of Service

Processional
 Presiding
 Invocation

Hymn
 Scripture
 Old Testament: Isaiah 61:1-2
 New Testament: 1John 4: 18-21
 Welcome

Introduction of the
 Speaker
 Selection
 Invitation to Christ
 Offering (“Every Praise”)
 Offering Prayer

The Act of Ordination

Charge to the Candidates
 Ordination Prayer
 Laying on of Hands

Presentation of Ministry Tools

Presentation of the Bible
 Presentation of the Ordination Certificate
 Presentation of Newly Ordained Ministers

Blessing of the Robes
Remarks from the Ordination Candidates
Blessing of the Food Benediction
Recessional

Agape Christian Liberation Ministries Outreach Flyer



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Chapter 2 Theological Framework

Biblical Scholars would support that scripture itself, as written, lends itself to bias. Althea Spencer Miller, a feminist New Testament scholar, would support this view.¹ She is a proponent of inclusivity and recognizes that biblical scripture does not often lend itself to this entity. She confesses that scripture leans more to the side of “exclusivity that has been used toward ill in the world”.² Agreeing with this view, it is easy to see how biases are generated. It is for this reason that I have chosen to use the King James Version for my biblical references for this chapter. I admit that it is not the only Biblical version that demonstrates male dominance and authority. Accordingly, I propose that there is a lack of study more broadly in this area. The view of an inerrant scripture and literal basis for the arguments written is, of course, used all the time. I maintain, that the context remains important.

Evidence of this can be seen in Danna Nolan Fewell’s and David M. Gunns’ “Narrative in the Hebrew Bible”.³ This truth is manifested in their interpretation of the unequal relationship, as a man and woman, between Sarai and Abram as viewed in Genesis 11-22. Also, it is why I have intentionally chosen to use the word “man” in researching the questions below. By doing so, it is my intention to demonstrate the gender bias that existed and continues to shape today’s attitudes, opinions, and actions

1. Sacred Text Conference Archives, Althea Spencer Miller Speaks on the New Testament: Sacred Text, ccdlib.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/ref/collections/sac/id/4

2. Ibid.

3. David M. Gunn and Danna Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press 1993), 90-100.

against Black female ministers and ordination. I do this with the knowledge and practice of using inclusive language.

This chapter will focus on the following questions: (1) How does Biblical interpretation impact or influence attitudes, opinions, and practices towards female preachers; (2) Does the Bible delineate gender in God's calling for preachers? (3) What does the Bible say about women's leadership in the church? (4) How does the Bible define "ordain"? and (5) What does the Bible say about the ordination processes?

My theoretical framework is based on Galatians 3:28, Paul says "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus". I have always interpreted this scripture to mean that we are all equal, in everything. Why then, is this not so in the process of the ordination of women? In the Baptist denomination, the first step to this process is acknowledging God's call to preach. The second step is to answer that call. The next step is to continue that road to ordination. Does God recognize the males' calling over that of the females? I believe that this is in contradiction to Galatians 3:28.

I found welcomed support in Demetrius Williams's⁴ work argues that taking the New Testament and particularly Galatians 3:28 seriously should lead black churches to challenge sexism and racism not only in society at large but also in African American churches and denominational bodies. Further, Williams contends that addressing oppressive practices in African American and other churches, they remain true to the

4. Demetrius K. Williams, *An End to Strife: The Politics of Gender in African American Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004).

liberation principle of the Bible—the equality of all people before God—which has been used effectively by black churches.

Accordingly, I believe that there are those who are called out, by God, for a divine purpose (Matt. 16:18). This could apply to anyone. I concur with Ephesians 4:11, “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. I interpret this to mean that God can call anyone, therefore, anyone can carry out the duties, the responsibilities of named titles, including Pastors and preachers, because everyone has an opportunity, a choice to answer that call. Also, the answer to this question can be inferred based on the previous discussion about who the church is obligated to serve. I believe that male and female, alike, can be called to preach.

How Does Biblical Interpretation Impact, Shape or Influence Attitudes and Opinions About Female Preachers?

Biblical interpretation and the ambiguity thereof, has contributed to the formulation of attitudes and opinions about women’s right to preach. More specifically, I believe that it has impacted the acceptance or disavowing of a woman who believes that they have been called by God to preach the Gospel. Many opposers have used scripture to validate their opposition to women as preachers. The “Creation Story” in Genesis has often served as the foundation for these. Adam was created first (Genesis 2) and Eve was created second, from the rib of Adam to be his helpmeet (Genesis 2:18) over you. This scripture clearly established a hierarchy between men and women. Genesis 3:16 says Adam and Eve sinned, it was then that God appointed the husband as the leader in the home (he shall rule).

I believe that Adam and Eve both sinned, but the consequence for Eve seemed to outweigh that for Adam. God promised Eve that conception and childbirth would be painful, and her sorrows would be greatly multiplied through these events. I maintain that it supports the common belief that Eve was subordinate to her mate, that men reigned supreme and had/have authority over women. I propose that this scripture and others have opened the doors to gender-based bias, concepts, practices, adopted attitudes, opinions and assignments that have existed for centuries and continues to exist. After all, the Bible said it and the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

I suggest that the Apostle Paul contributed greatly to the gender biases that continue to plague women's quest for equal footing in the church. I find Paul's perspective on women's standing to have double meanings. In other words, in one breath he is supportive and then he contradicts himself. This is evident in his inference that men and women are equal in Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 4:11. However, he makes a clear distinction of man's superiority in other scriptures. For example, in I Corinthians 14:34-35 he says "Let women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church". Firstly, it is my understanding that the formation of Christianity was established on the foundation of "grace" not "the Law".

Perhaps, this explains Paul's multiple contradictions about gender roles in the church. In Timothy 2: 11-15 Paul expresses "Let a woman receive instruction with entire submissiveness, but I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created and then Eve. And it was not

Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression, but women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. In this scripture it is easy to visualize how male subjectivity has been adopted and influences today's attitudes, opinions and practices about women's rights to preach, to be ordained. It is noted that Paul says "I", not God, do not give women permission to speak in churches. God's voice is omitted, not considered as Paul speaks. Paul takes full ownership in this opinion about the rights of woman in the church.

Paul's contradictions are flagrant and evident. In Titus 2:2-10, but as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷ Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. ⁹ Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Yet another of his contradictions appear in Acts 2:17-18 where he says " And it shall be in the last days, God says that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon my bondslaves, both man and women, I will in those days pour forth My Spirit and they shall prophesy". Likewise, as I noted above, in Galatians 3:28, Paul reiterates that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, there is

neither male nor female, for you, are all one in Christ”. Further, I propose that since there is no distinction between male and female in Christ, neither should there be any distinction in the pulpit. I take the stance that to prohibit women from preaching is to elevate men over women, thereby violating their equality in Christ. I maintain that opinions about the ordination of women are influenced by Biblical scripture.

It is no surprise why those opinions are so varied and in many instances are conflicted in this subject matter as I will note below. Without question, how the scriptures are interpreted impact who, when and if male pastors either serve to support or reject a woman’s right to become ordained.

The King James Version Dictionary⁵ defines the word “ordain” as follows:

What Does the Bible Say About Ordination and the Ordination Process?

Properly, to set; to establish in an office or order; hence, to invest with a ministerial function or sacerdotal power; to introduce and establish or settle in the pastoral office with the customary forms of solemnities; as, to ordain a minister of the gospel. In America, men are ordained over a specific church and congregation, or as evangelists without the charge of a specific church, or as deacons in the Episcopal church

To appoint; to decree. Jeroboam ordained a feast in the 8th month (I Kings 12)
As many were ordained to eternal life, believed (Acts 13)

To set; to establish; to institute; to constitute
To set apart for an office; to appoint
Jesus ordained twelve that they should be with him (Mark 3)
To appoint; to prepare
For Tophet is ordained of old (Isaiah 30)

5. KJV Dictionary Definition: Ordain. <https://av1611.com/kjbp/kjv-dictionary/ordain.html>

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (IBSE)⁶ offers that the KJV renders as many as 35 different words, 11 Hebrew words in the Old Testament and 21 Greek words in Apocrypha and the New Testament and 3 Latin words in Apocrypha. This is attributed to the fact that the English word has many shades of meaning, especially as used in the time that the King James Version was made. They were as follows:

1. To set in order, arrange, prepare:

All things that we ordained festival, turn from their office to black funeral
Shakespeare, *Romeo, and Juliet*, IV, v, 84.

This meaning is now obsolete. It is found in the KJV of Psalms 132:17 through; Isaiah 30:33, Hebrews 9:6. In each of these cases the Revised Version, British and American, substitute "prepare". In Chronicles 17:9, the Revised Version British and American, uses the term appointed. Psalms 7:13 offers "make". Habakkuk 1:12 uses "to establish, institute or bring into being.

The IBSE⁷ offers the following the additional definitions of the word "ordain":

1. To decree, give orders, prescribe, i.e. Esther 9:27
To set apart for an office or duty, appoint, destine
To appoint ceremonially to the ministerial or priestly office, to confer Holy orders on. The later technical or ecclesiastical sense is never found in English Versions of the Bible. The idea of formal or ceremonial setting -apart from to office is never implied in the Word.

Edward T. Hiscox⁸ sets forth the following primary propositions that accurately reflect the New Testament doctrine of ordination as it applies to pastors:

PROP. I. That the ordination of the New Testament was an election, or appointment, to the ministerial office, and not a ceremonial setting apart, or

6. Encyclopedias-International Standard Bible Encyclopedias-Ordain; Ordination Definition and Meaning. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/ordain-ordination/>

7. Ibid.

8. E. T. Hiscox, "*The New Directory for Baptist Churches*," Grand Rapids Michigan: Kregel Publications, Now published under the title *Principles & Practices for Baptist churches* (1970): 345.

consecration to that office.

PROP. II. That there is no proof in the New Testament that persons chosen to the office of elder, pastor or bishop in the apostolic churches were designated for, or inducted into, that office by any formal service or ceremony whatever.

PROP. III. That, though the laying on of hands was common on many occasions, as an ancient Oriental Jewish and early Christian form of blessing, especially in the bestowment of the gifts of the Spirit, yet there is neither precept nor precedent in the New Testament to require its use in the ordination of Christian ministers.

My own belief about ordination aligns more with Acts 13:2 which says that Barnabas and Saul came directly from God “the work whereunto I have called them”, they were sent forth by the Holy Spirit. Paul and Barnabas are said to have been ordained (because they had been called by God). This is different from Man’s concept or practice of ordaining someone. Likewise, much credence is given to the laying on of hands. It is believed that this act does not refer to an act of ordination, but, probably to the restoration of the penitent. In the traditional ordination process, the laying on of hands is an integral part of and considered pertinent to the process.

It is understood that ordination applies to an appointment, preparation or assignment to a position. I believe God ordains or designates who can preach the Gospel, not man. I do believe that man can assign a position or appoint to a position in a church in an organizational sense, but it is God that anoints, ascribes gifts and sets apart those that he calls to preach the Gospel. Paul assigned positions to the churches that were established in the name of Christianity, prayerfully, under the direction of God. I came to a very significant understanding, that my issue is not only with man’s self-ascribed power to determine who, when and if can become ordained or preach, but it is also with the ordination process, as well.

I maintain that only God can ordain and that the ordination process, including the laying on of hands, is of Man, not God. I concur that this is merely an outward, public act of approval, a symbolic act of public recognition of persons holding high offices in the church. Based on this, I question why women are required to jump through hoops in their quest to experience the ordination process across denominational lines. More poignantly, I question the legitimacy of this when God has already called women to preach, God has already ordained them.

Succinctly, the modern definition of ordination is the act of granting pastoral authority or sacerdotal power. The Merriam Webster Dictionary⁹ defines the term sacerdotal as relating to Priests or the Priesthood. Synonyms are sacred, desecrate, sacrifice, sacrilege, consecrate or sacrament. Usually, a traditional ordination service is a ceremony in which someone is commissioned or appointed to a position within the church. Traditionally, the ceremony involves the laying on of hands. However, the biblical definition is somewhat different. The word ordained in the Bible refers to a setting in place or designation. For example, in Acts 7:10 Joseph was ordained as a ruler in Egypt. In Matthew 24:45, the steward in Jesus' parable was ordained to oversee a household.

In Acts 6:1-6 deacons were ordained to serve the Jerusalem church. In Titus 1:5, Pastors were ordained in the city of Crete. It is important to note that in each of these examples is the mode of ordination specified, nor is any ceremony detailed. The ordinations are simply appointments. This supports my belief that God calls persons into

9. Dictionary by Merriam-Webster. www.merriam-webster.com/

ministry and qualifies them with gifts, not man. To reiterate, the ordination ceremony itself does not confer any special power, it simply gives public recognition to God's choice of leadership.

The Protestant Denominations, especially the Baptists, incorporates the participation of the Church. In other words, an ordination candidate's approval for ordination comes from the Pastor and the Congregation. Again, I question this arrangement because it appears that if the Pastor and the Congregation do not accept the candidate, then ordination is denied. What then happens to the fact that God has already called or set apart this person to preach, man or woman. Is God's decision usurped? Clearly, the scriptures do not support that the church is part of the decision-making process. Paul does incorporate this requirement, but I could find no such documentation in the scripture that this is what God intended.

I contend that the traditional ordination process, as is implemented today, exerts implicit barriers. It opens the door to subjectivity, elitism, division, oppression, judgment, sexism and division. There is just too much room to deviate from God's choice and intent. Contrarily, The Priesthood of all Believer's is a doctrine of the Protestant Christian Church that says that every individual has direct access to God without ecclesiastical mediation and each individual shares the responsibility of ministering to the other members of the community of believers" (Hebrews 7:23-28). Can this be interpreted to mean that all Christians are preachers? I interpret this to be in direct contradiction to the ordination process. If all Christians are ministers, according to the doctrine described, then, why must candidates be subject to the rigors of the modern-day, traditional ordination process? Further, it appears to contradict or diminish the

significance of God’s divine calling. This understanding provides an excellent segue into answering the question, “What does the Bible say about women’s leadership in the church”?

What Does the Bible Say About Women’s Leadership in the Church: Does the Bible Delineate Gender in God’s Calling for Preachers?

After, finding so many contradictions by Paul in scripture, I was very surprised to learn that Paul acknowledged so many women for their significant, leadership roles in the church, in ministry. To the contrary, Marg Mowczko¹⁰, argues that Paul did not have a low opinion of women and that he was not the presupposed misogynist. She offers that Paul recognized women as apostles, ministers, and pastors. However, I push back because the capacities in which these women worked in the church, is often not clearly stated by Paul or the Scripture. Below is a list of women to whom Mowczko makes reference:¹¹

Phoebe: Paul introduces her to the Roman church and gives her a glowing recommendation. Paul refers to Phoebe as “our sister” and he tells the Romans that she is a minister or deacon of the Cenchranean Church. (Rom 16:1-2).

Priscilla: Priscilla and Aquila (her husband) were friends and ministry colleagues of Paul. The three worked, traveled, and ministered together. They were leaders and hosts of a house church in Ephesus. It was in Ephesus that Priscilla, with Aquila, taught Apollos about Christian baptism (1 Timothy 2:12 and Acts 18:24-26).

Junia and Andronicus: Were possibly a married couple and were outstanding among the apostles (Romans 16:7).

Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis: Paul writes that these women worked very hard for their Lord and the Church (Romans 16:6) and Persis (Romans 16:12).

10. Marg Mowczko. Paul’s Greetings to Women Ministers, June 7, 2012, <https://margmowczko.com/category/equality-and-gender-issues>.

11. Ibid.

Nympha: The host and the leader of the church that met in her home.

Apphia and Archippus (along with Philemon), were leaders of the house church.

Euodia and Syntyche: were the leaders of the Philippian church.

Lydia: The first Christian convert in Philippi and the first to host church meetings there. Thus, she was the first to function as a pastor in the city (Acts 16:14-15, 40).

Paul recognized Nympha, Apphia, Priscilla, Euodia and Syntyche, and other women, as ministers and house church leaders.

I was pleased to learn that Paul had embraced and accepted so many women's ministerial gifts. However, this finding does not negate the fact that his scriptural contradictions did and continues to be interpreted in a way that negatively impacts women's opportunities for ordination and ministry in today's world. The dye had already been cast. The opinions, attitudes, and beliefs had already been ingrained in the hearts and minds of man based on the acceptance of Paul's words of contradiction. Taking into consideration of Mowczko's findings, I question whether Paul acknowledged the leadership roles of women were ignored or just conveniently overlooked by today's male ministers?

At the risk of burdening Paul with the failure to recognize women's roles in the Bible, many other women have demonstrated leadership roles. Who better to mention than Mary Magdalene? Her significance in this capacity cannot be denied. She was the first person to see Jesus after His resurrection. He appeared to her and instructed her to go and inform the other disciples (and Peter) that He had risen from the dead and they were to meet Him in Galilee. What an awesome privilege, that Jesus would assign her to such a meaningful task? What a vote of confidence from Christ to trust her with such a

purposeful task? Christopher Scott reminds us of some of the Old Testament favorites, women who manifested extraordinary signs of leadership or courage.¹²

Esther would save a nation. She thwarted the plot of Haman, who planned to have Esther's people, the Jews, eliminated. She married Xerxes, a Persian King, who granted Esther her heart's desire. He granted her wish to save her people. I believe that she exhibited the qualifications of a skilled strategist, a leader in her own right. Also, I would go as far as to say that she was a feminist.

Vashti, Xerxes previous wife, could also be considered both a feminist and a leader. As the story goes, she refused to submit to her husband request to show up at a party thrown for his friend. Xerxes was inebriated and demanded (multiple times) that Vashti appear and join the party. He was insistent, but Vashti ignored his demands and did not come to his beck and call. She took a chance, possibly putting her life on the line because she refused the King's order. She also demonstrated the qualification of a leader.

Debra was the only female judge of the Israelites and a prophetess in the Old Testament. A judgeship represented a position of power and authority. It was a respected position and the people of both genders looked up to her and sought her out for advice, counseling. She commanded an army, an army of men. I am confident in saying that she is the only female figure in the bible with an overt appointment of distinct, unquestionable authority over men. It is ironic that she was instructed by God to order Barak, to kill Jabin, the corrupt and unjust king of Canaan and his military commander,

12. Christopher L. Scott, "The Surprising and Often Forgotten Women in the Old Testament." <https://christopherscottblog.com/women-leaders-old-testament/>

Sisera. He refused the assignment. Barak refused, leaving Debra and Jael, another female, to carry out the duty. This is a rare occurrence in both the Old and New Testaments.

Chapter Three Research Questions and Findings

In my introduction, I expressed an interest in identifying obstacles that impede Black Female Ministers' road to ordination. Further, I queried, why in this day and age, is this still such an area of contention and controversy? I contended that the issues are multi-dimensional in nature and that there are multiple contributing factors to the formation of obstacles for the female ordination seekers. It is agreed that we continue to live in a patriarchal society, where male preachers are in power and have control and influence over who gets ordained and who doesn't. It is still implied that female ministers should stay in their place and the pulpit is not one of those places. I proposed that male preacher dominance (The Good Ole Boys' Club) is not the only creator of obstacles for women seeking ordination.

In addition, I hypothesized that the following factors contribute to conditions that challenge and pose obstacles for female ministers' quest for ordination: (a) Lay females in the congregation; (b) other female ministers; (c) Biblical interpretation; (d) personal subjectivity; (e) church politics; (f) doctrinal rules, regulations and practices; (g) tradition; (h) societal beliefs and cultures; (i) available resources and support.

I project that parallels will be seen between my hypotheses and the data collected from the questionnaire. Also, I hope to identify additional challenges, as revealed, in the questionnaire responses of the 6 participants chosen for this project. More specifically, an attempt will be made to collect data that will answer or provide some insight into the following questions:

1. What obstacles, if any are you or have you experienced on your road to ordination?
2. What are shared issues about the call by God to ministers and ordination?

3. How do each of these women understand ordination?
4. What is the purpose of being ordained?

Participants

My project is comprised of a total of 6 participants from various denominations and age groups. Each of these participants is a Black female minister in a Black Church.

More specifically, the breakdown is as follows:

- 2 Ministers who are seeking to become, ordained not yet ordained (N.Y.O.)
- 2 Ministers who have already been ordained by way of a “traditional ordination” process (T.O.)
- 2 Ministers who have already been ordained by way of a “non-traditional” Process (N.T.O.)

Questionnaire

I developed a questionnaire and designed it to elicit information associated with the participants’ personal experiences as relates to challenges, obstacles, and their ordination processes or the pursuance thereof. The tool was meant to garner descriptive and quantitative information. The objective of this type of questionnaire is to provide the opportunity to do a comparative analysis (see Chapter 4) of the information obtained from the 3 categories of ministers, N.Y.O., T.O. and N.T.O. I wanted the responses to be reflected in the personal voices of the participants as relates to opinion, attitudes, feelings, and beliefs. Accordingly, speaking from personal experiences, I know that these experiences are sometimes painful, hurtful and I wanted an opportunity to capture these emotions.

The overall goal is to gain more insight into the following areas: (1) Obstacles, if any, experienced on the road to ordination; (2) Shared issues about the call by God to minister and ordination; (3) Understanding of ordination; (3) Significance of being ordained.

Raw Data

Question # 1: Age breakdown of the 6 participants was as follows:

1 participant between 30-40 (N.Y.O.)

1 participant between 40-50 (N.T.O.)

4 participants between 60-70 (N.T.O., N.Y.O., 2-T.O.)

Question # 2: The denomination breakdown was as follows:

3 Baptists (#s 3, 4, 6)

1 Pentecostal (# 5)

2 Non-Denominational (#s 1, 2)

Question # 3: Received God's Call to preach (Figure 1)

#1 1987

#2 2015

#3 1998

#4 1989

#5 1992

#6 1993

Question # 4: Answered God's call to preach (Figure 1)

#1 1990

#2 2018

#3 2017

#4 1989

#5 1993

#6 2017

Question # 5: Obstacles, if any, delayed you from answering God's call to preach

#1 Waited on the pastor and other church leaders to recognize her calling; pastor also limited her to praying and encouragement to serve the congregation

#2 Didn't believe that she was good enough; Self-doubt even after she received her calling from God

#3 Her own disobedience and fear of the unknown

#4 Lack of Direction and Instruction from her old pastor; Changed her church and received instruction from the new pastor who encouraged her to attend Seminary; Graduated with master's degree of Divinity, but was not considered for ordination by the pastor

#5 Didn't feel that she would be believed; Didn't feel worthy of the calling or "Holy" enough

#6 Diagnosed with cancer; 2 small children; Victim of domestic violence; Victim of homelessness; Political “church stuff”; Jealousy; Sexism, Church hurt; Moving from state to state; Caregiver of elderly parents.

Question #6: Year ordination journey started (Figure 3)

#1 1992

#2 2018

#3 Did not answer the question, perhaps the question was not clear to her

#4 2009

#5 1996

#6 2017

Question #7: Currently ordained

#1 Yes

#2 Yes

#3 No

#4 No

#5 Yes

#6 Yes

Question #8: Year ordained (Figure 3)

#1 2018

#2 2018

#3 Did not answer

#4 Did not answer

#5 1998

#6 2018

Question #9: Obstacles, if any, that hindered or slowed your path to ordination

#1 Not approved by Pastor

#2 Husband sick

#3 N/A

#4 My current pastor; It has been almost 10 years since I graduated with my Master of Divinity degree. It wasn't until the subject came up in a Baptist ministers' conference that led to the fact that I was not ordained. Now my pastor is considering it. The pastor that helped me died over 12 years ago. Then we got a new pastor who said that "Unless you have been called to pastor a church, have a job at a Seminary or as a leader of a special group, the church will not ordain you. We have 6 ministers who have earned their Master of Divinity or Doctor of Ministry degree, yet they have not been ordained. We have completed all the requirements, but it is up to the current pastor, if he wants, to ordain you. My ministry has been hindered because I am not ordained. I know that God has a plan. I am an author, founder of a not-for-profit organization, community activist

and a member of the Baptist's Minister's Conference. I do believe that what is for you, is for your ad no one can take your blessing away unless God says so.

#5 Self, her pastor wanted to ordain her, but not her husband, a Licensed Minister, so she and spouse turned down her opportunity to be ordained because this would have caused a problem at home with her husband.

#6 People frowning because I stand on my own ground and speak up and out and because of school choices (not worthy) or rebuffing males

Question #10: Satisfaction with your ordination process

#1 Yes

#2 Yes

#3 N/A

#4 No

#5 Yes

#6 Yes, satisfied with C.O.G.I.C.; Not satisfied with Baptist because of my belief that Men and Women block the ordination process

Question #11: If yes, explain

#1 Laying on of hands believed to have transferred God's anointing in her life so that she would be able to serve as a Reverend in the Kingdom of God

#2 Moving by the spirit of God, things happened with the spirit of God giving insight to into a calling to preach the word of God and knowing that it is the right thing to do

#3 N/A

#4 N/A

#5 My 2-year training process was with a group of 9 female ministers and 2 males, one of which was her husband; We went through an intense study period and a highly qualified female pastor; We hands-on mission project and was given many opportunities to preach and serve God's people; ordained by a known Bishop in her pastor's ministry circle who came to know the ordination candidates

#6 The person who ordained me said "If the Lord has called you to preach, I must pray and help you; No walls or barriers with C.O.G.I.C., however, Baptist church rules "overkill.

Question #12: If No, explain

#1 N/A

#2 N/A

#3 N/A

#4 It is up to your pastor if he or she wants to ordain you. There were and still are hindrances in the Ministry. It is still a "Good Ole Boys" network.

I'm still hoping that God will open a door for me. I may have to leave (current church), but it's all good. What God has for you, is for you only.

#5 N/A

#6 Too many male pastors/preachers don't want women; If you don't respond to their requests, they get cocky and try to block you; Females are the worst, they are jealous and envious with attitudes; Old ones are stuck in "old ways"

Question #13: Changes you would make to the ordination process that you have experienced or are experiencing

#1 More women ordained

#2 More Holy Spirit, fewer Politics

#3 N/A

#4 First, I would ordain all of those who have completed their training and education; Ordination would take place one year from graduation from Seminary; Steer them to the right Catechist that would help them to prepare for the journey; God is able; What is for you, is for you only, no one can take it away from you; If you are called, God will equip you

#5 None

#6 I would get rid of the process because a lot of pastors never knew it or went to any formal extensions of any kind of educational studies

Question #14: Reason why it is important for you to be ordained

#1 That I may be licensed to freely work in the Body of Christ to do the will of God to minister to the many people on the earth that need me in the areas that I am needed

#2 As a minister, we stand boldly to preach the word of God to those who listen and to those that do and want to learn the Word of God and to continue to love and pray for those who won't listen as leaders to pray for each other joining in a union before the love of Jesus Christ.

#3 I am currently in the process of moving out of the state of NY to another state and I will be going to another state

#4 I would be able to help more people and have the necessary credentials needed for the journey of ministry, now having been ordained; I cannot perform certain duties, such as the Lord's Supper, performing marriages, etc.; With the proper credentials I will be able to carry on the ministry without obstacles in my path; I do believe, I will be ordained soon.

#5 Certain legal functions require that the minister be ordained in order that the action/s be considered legal; being ordained is a public proclamation of the acceptance of God's calling to a work, responsibility and commitment of service, but is recognized by the world which allows me to go places that not being ordained would not

#6 For me it is an added blessing from the Saints of God and an additional sign of commitment; A lot of this is about “friends” or “Boys” club cliques rather than about God, Jesus and love one another

Question #15: What does ordination have to do with you preaching the Gospel

#1 It will enable me to perform weddings, funerals, christenings, etc.; I need to be licensed for the service to be official; Preaching the Gospel is one of the greatest services that God has appointed us to do, therefore, being ordained has given me the right to fulfill the duties that are needed in the Body of Christ

#2 This is the blessing for continued work in the ministry of Jesus Christ; This service is honored among the Church at Antioch for we are already preachers moving by the Holy Ghost, God and not by men

#3 In my opinion ordination has nothing to do with preaching the Gospel

#4 Some of the churches want “ordained” ministers or pastors to preach. Am a licensed minister. At times, I don’t get preaching engagements because I am not a Reverend; In some cases, I do get an invite; If I were ordained, it would open up more platforms to preach; I do believe that if God wants you to preach, he will make a way for you; What is for you, is for you only; God is able

#5 Anyone can preach the Gospel if they have first been ordained by God to do so; however, an official ordination solidifies one’s acceptance of God’s calling and sending; It also legitimizes the calling and sending that

is needed and required secularly; It serves as proof that the individual underwent training and is supported and endorsed by the ordaining entity #6 Personally added steps to walk, teach and preach the Good News; Final commitment to ministry; Otherwise, I know that God has appointed me, and I have humbly answered the call to God; First and foremost, not fearing man nor caring about judgmental people; Work must be done

Findings

It was interesting to see that all candidates were at least 30 years old. The overall age range was from 30 to 70 years of age. This infers a certain degree of maturity. The age range for receiving God's call to preach was from 30 to 70 years. The average age of when they received the call was 33.5. On the other hand, the time frame between receiving God's call and answering the call to preach was from 3 to 24 years. Even though the participants' denominations varied, it was noted that 50% were Baptist, 30% were non-denominational and 20% was Pentecostal.

I wanted to get a picture of what the journey to ordination looked like for the participants, therefore, in Question # 5, I asked "What obstacles, if any, delayed you from answering God's call to preach. Not to my surprise, the answers varied. There were the anticipated responses, such as those obstacles often blamed on male pastors. For example, participant #1 stated that she was waiting for her pastor and other church leaders to recognize God's calling on her life. She admitted that she was relegated to other church assignments, such as prayer intercession, spiritual counseling to other church members, including the pastor and his family and other church service assignments.

Participant #4 shared a similar experience. She stated that there was a lack of direction and instruction from her male pastor. Further, she shared that she then changed her church and denomination.

However, I was surprised to discover the extent to which some of the candidates blamed themselves for impediments. For example, participant # 2 stated that she did not believe that she was good enough. Relatedly, # 3 stated that her own disobedience and her fear of the unknown, to answer the call impeded her. Participant #5 expressed that she felt that she would not be believed that God called her. She did not feel worthy or Holy enough of the calling. She was Baptist then changed to Pentecostal, Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C.) where she received pastoral instruction and the encouragement to attend Seminary.

Participant # 6 responses shed insights into other areas that I had not considered. She revealed personal strife as obstacles to her response to “the calling”. She stated that the following life occurrences played a major role in her delay. She was diagnosed with cancer, had a newborn baby and 2 small children and the caregiver for her elderly parents. In addition, she was the victim of domestic violence and homelessness which caused her to move from state to state. I must admit that my hypotheses did not take into consideration the obstacles presented by personal life occurrences and the extent to which they can impact decisions. Participant #6 also named political “church stuff” such as jealousy, sexism, and church hurt as more commonly recognized obstacles.

In reviewing the responses to Question # 5 it was revealed to me that self-doubt played a major role in the response time from receipt to acceptance of God’s calling to preach for at least 50% of the participants (#2, #3, #5). Even though they believed that

God had called them. Likewise, at least 30% (#1, #4) of the participants were depending on pastoral support, direction and approval before they answered God's call to preach. This implies that God's calling alone was not enough and/or the calling had to be sanctioned by someone else before it could be accepted. This brings into question God's authority and the dependence on humankind for approval. If God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)?

Question #9 asks "What obstacles, if any, hindered or slowed up your path to ordination". Participant #1 held her pastor (Baptist) of 23 years responsible for not recognizing God's calling on her life and posing obstacles to her ordination. She stated that she was called to preach in 1992 (Baptist), but was not ordained until 2018 (Non-denominational) when she joined another church. Participant # 2 attributes obstacles to her husband's development of Alzheimer's Disease which required much of her time as a caregiver. Participant # 3 did not name any obstacles because she is not yet seeking ordination.

Participant # 4 blames her current pastor's lack of support and encouragement for hindering her path to ordination. She personalized his feelings, attitude, and opinion about her candidacy for ordination. I could feel the pain and frustration in her responses. She was called to preach by God in 1989 and answered that call in the same year. She started her quest for ordination in 2009. However, her journey has been burdened with one obstacle after the other. She revealed that she obtained her Master of Divinity degree 10 years ago, but still has not been considered for ordination. She shared her pastor's belief that you cannot be ordained unless you have been called to pastor a church, teach in a seminary or are the leader of a special group the church will not ordain you. Further,

she shared that there are currently 6 ministers in her church who have obtained their Master of Divinity degrees and have completed all the “requirements” but have not yet been ordained. It would have been interesting for me to know how many of these ministers are females and the specifics of the “requirements” referenced. Participant #4 concludes that the pastor has the authority to say who he wants to ordain. She verbalizes that what is for you, no one can take it away from you unless God says so.

Participant #5 named herself as being an obstacle in her own path to ordination. She explains that her spouse is also a licensed minister, but not yet ordained. They are members of the same church. The pastor wanted to ordain her, but not her husband. She rejected the opportunity to become ordained before her husband because it would have caused a problem in the household. What does this say about being obedient to God’s calling on her life? Who has the authority, God or her husband?

Participant # 6 believed that her outspokenness slowed up her ordination process. She shared that people frowned upon her because she stood up and spoke out against the things to which she objected. For example, she rejected to comments about her school choice, which was not deemed noteworthy by others. She also stated that her progress was impeded because of “rebuffing males” in her church.

There is a common theme among the responses to this Question #9. The inferences and realities are that there can be no ordination if the call has not been validated, not by God, but by the pastor or another human authoritative figure. If this is true then I beg the question, Does God’s calling bear any significance? Does God’s calling count for anything? What role does God’s calling play in ordination? Where is God in all of this? Based on the participants’ responses is God’s authority being

challenged or not even considered by Church authority? Subjectivity appears to play a larger than life significance in who is ordained and when they can be ordained.

When asked about their ordination satisfaction in Question # 10 and the reason for their responses Question #11 the findings were as follows: Participant #1 Yes, #2 Yes, #5 Yes and #6 Yes and No. Participant #6's response was unique because she had been ordained-twice, once by the Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C.) and once by Baptist. She revealed that she was pleased with the ordination by C.O.G.I.C., but not pleased with the Baptist ordination. Statistically, 80% of the participants were satisfied and 20% were not.

Participant #1 stated that she was satisfied because she was blessed with laying on of hands which transferred God's anointing in her life to be able to serve as a Reverend on the Kingdom of God. Participant #2 was pleased with her ordination because she believed that moving by the Spirit, things happened. She also expressed that the Spirit of God gave her insight on a calling to preach the Word of God and just knowing that it is the thing to do. She received confirmation through her ordination. Participants #3 did not respond because she has not yet been ordained. However, Participant #4 has not yet been ordained either, but she chose to respond to this question. She reiterated that ordination is the decision of your pastor. She voiced that there are still hindrances in the ministry that will impact the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the ordination process. She voiced that "It is still a "Good Ole Boys" network. She says further stated "I'm still hoping that God will open a door for me. I may have to leave (her church), but it is still good". She firmly believes that what God has for you only you will receive. This has been a recurrent and resounding theme in several of her responses in this questionnaire.

Participant #5 contributes her satisfaction to the 2-year training process that was with a group of 9 female ministers and 2 males (one of which was her husband). She reflected on the intense study period with her pastor (male) and a highly qualified female pastor, the laying on of hands mission projects and the many opportunities to preach and serve God's people. She concluded that she was then ordained by a known bishop in her pastor's ministry circle who also came to know the ordination candidates.

Participant # 6 explained that she was dissatisfied with her Baptist ordination because "Baptist Church" rules overkill. She believes that there are too many male Pastors/preachers that don't want women and that if you don't respond to their requests they get "cocky" and try to block you. She revealed that "females" are the worst because they are jealous and envious with attitudes. She also expressed that the "old ones" are stuck in "old ways". On the other hand, Participant #6 was pleased with her C.O.G.I.C. ordination process. She said the person that ordained her shared, "If the Lord has called you to preach, I must pray with you". #6 felt that in C.O.G.I.C., unlike Baptist, there were no walls or barriers to hinder her path to ordination. Participant # 6's response regarding the lack of support by females in the church is supported by

Ari Goldman¹³ shared comments made by Dr. W.T.W., a senior pastor at a well-known major Church in NYC. The referenced-pastor, reportedly stated that some female young female preachers may be better at preaching than at working with congregants. He

13. Goldman, Ari L. "Black Women's Bumpy Path to Church Leadership," *The New York Times*, 1990. <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/07/29/myregion/black-women-s-bumpy-path-to-church-leadership.html> (Accessed 9/15/2018).

goes on to offer that women came to their positions as assistant pastors with too many expectations. He continues by saying that women want to go immediately to major positions in major churches and that's not going to happen. He compared this to women in corporate life who want to immediately want to become CEO. Last but, not least, he stated that young female ministers often run into opposition from older female church members who are accustomed to a male presence in the pulpit. Admittedly, he believes that other pastors share his view. He blamed "this feminist garbage" for the unhappy experiences of the black female ministers.

Question #13 gives the participants opportunities to voice the changes that they would make to the ordination process, based on their experiences. Participant #1 expressed that she would like to see more women ordained. She believes that they are doing the work in the Kingdom of God and that they deserve to receive the true calling that God has given them. Participant #2 stated that "My experience was so loving and caring in the Spirit of God. That's what we should all be looking for, not the politics, but the Holy Spirit, the emotions and the character of God". Participant #3 chose not to respond to this question, perhaps because she felt that this question did not apply not to because she is not yet ordained.

However, Participant #4 has not yet been ordained either, but she chose to respond to this question. I believe that she is qualified to answer this question because she has been waiting since 1989 to become ordained. She stated, "First, I would ordain all those who have completed their training and education. Secondly, ordination would be done one year from their Seminary graduation. I would steer them to the right Catechism

that helps to prepare them for the ordination journey. God is able. What is for you only, no one can take it away from you. If you are called God will equip you”.

Participant #5 indicates that she would not make any changes. My assumption is that this response is based on her experience as a C.O.G.I.C. member, not a Baptist (see response to Question # 10). Participant# 6 stated, “I’d get rid of the ordination process because a lot of these Pastors never knew the process or any formal extensions of any kind of educational studies.

Question # 14 was designed to gain insight into the importance or significance that being ordained holds for these participants. Participant #1 believes that ordination gives her license to freely work in the Body of Christ, to do the will of God and to minister to the many people on earth that need her. Participant #2 stated that being an ordained minister gives her license to preach the Word of God to those who listen and to those that want to learn the Word of God and do the work of Christ. She verbalized that it also enables her to love and pray for those who won’t listen as leaders to pray for each other, joining in a union before the love of Jesus Christ. Participant # 3 responded “I am currently in the process of moving out of the state of NY to another state. I will be going to another church”. I am not sure if the participant understood what this question was asking. Perhaps she did not want to respond to it. The response was not comprehensible or appropriate to the question.

Participant #4 expressed that being ordained would permit her to help more people and have the necessary credentials for the journey of ministry. “My ministry has been hindered because I am not ordained”. Ordination would allow me to perform certain duties, such as the Lord’s Supper, Marriages, etc. With the proper credentials, I will be

able to carry on in the ministry without obstacles in my path. I do believe that I will be ordained soon”.

Participant # 5 maintained that certain legal functions require that she be ordained for the action to be considered legal. She said, “Being ordained is a public proclamation of acceptance of God’s call to work, responsibility, and commitment of service that is recognized by the world. Being ordained allows me to go places that, not being ordained, would not. Participant # 6 touts “For me, it is an added blessing and an additional sign of commitment. A lot of this is about “friends and boys club” rather than about God, Jesus and loving one another.

Question # 15 What does ordination have to do with you preaching the Gospel? This question was designed to determine if the Participants’ believe that there is a correlation between ordination and preaching the Gospel. In other words, does the participant believe that they must be ordained in order to preach, if so, why? Participant #1 “Being ordained helps me to do weddings, Funerals, Christenings, etc. I need to be licensed for the service to be official. Preaching the Gospel is one of the greatest services that God has appointed me to do. Being ordained has given me the right to fulfill the duties that are needed in the Body of Christ.

Participant #2 stated “This is the blessing for continued work in the Ministry of Jesus Christ. This service is honored in the Church at Antioch, for we are already moving by the Holy Ghost, God, and not by man. Participant # 3 responded that “In my opinion ordination has nothing to do with preaching the Gospel. Participant #4 espouses that “Some churches want ordained ministers or preachers to preach. I am a licensed minister and at times I don’t get preaching engagements because I am not a Reverend. In some

cases, I get invites. If I were ordained, it would open up more platforms for me to preach”. Participant #5 shares that “Anyone can preach the Gospel if they have first been ordained by God to do so. However, an official ordination solidifies one’s acceptance of God’s calling and sending. It also legitimizes the calling and sending that is needed and required secularly. It serves as proof that the individual underwent training and is supported/endorsed as by the ordaining entity.

I agree with Participant #5’s view because I firmly believe that my chances of garnering the support that I seek are much better because of my ordination status. Being ordained legitimizes me and my ministry with the lay community. I realized that to be best prepared to actualize this vision, I need to have ordination status.

Participant #6 contends that “ordination is a personally added step to walk, teach and preach the “Good News”. Ordination represents a commitment to the ministry. Otherwise, I know that God has appointed me. I humbly answered the call to God first and foremost, not fearing man or caring about people judging”. Participant # 6 says she acknowledges that the work must be done.

In conclusion, across age groups, denominational divides, and ministerial ordination status, the findings revealed multiple shared several themes, beliefs, and feelings among the participants about obstacles and ordination and its processes. Identified obstacles included church politics, sexism as manifested through the “Good Ole Boys” network (male authority and domination), church cliques, jealous and envious female Pastors/preachers, self-imposed power and authority, as well as, that ascribed by the church itself, personal challenges and life experiences, self-doubt, lack of preparation through formal education, training, guidance and supervision by church leadership.

I questioned, “How much do female ministers contribute to the ascription of power and authority to pastors and other authority figures”? At least one participant revealed that she is considering leaving the church because, after 10 years in ministry, she has not yet been ordained. 3 other participants revealed that they did leave a church for the same reason. Not only did they leave the church, but they also changed denominations. It is documented that many female ministers have left churches and denominations because they realized that under male pastoral leadership, they were on dead end roads. Ari L. Goldman’s¹⁴ article tells the story of Caroline Ann Knight, one such Minister who chose this option. She was an Assistant Minister at a major church in NYC. She reportedly took a handful of members with her and founded her own church. Agreeably, Goldman points out that Rev. Knight’s story is typical of the black female ministers around the country. In this same article, it was noted that Rev. Carolyn E. Taylor, became the first woman to lead Walker Temple A.M.E. Church in Los Angeles, a 650-member congregation. She quoted, “I doubt I would be the pastor of a large church today if I had to wait for the call from a congregation.” I personally, experienced similar situations, and founded my own church because I was tired of “church as usual”. Churches who were not meeting the needs of the community-at-large. The thought to help others Black Female Ministers was a welcomed and appreciated discovery.

Each participant believed that they were called by God to preach and each professed that they answered that call. The findings revealed a spiritual connection among their calling, response to the call and ordination. There, was a consensus that ordination was more about “something else” and less about God. It was expressed that

14. Ibid.

there was a desire to see more women ordained. When asked about the importance of being ordained the responses were not surprising. It was stated that ordination legitimized the position of Minister. It led to recognition and acceptance by the church, church leadership, the state, and peers. Most of the Participants expressed their belief that being ordained is necessary to preach the Gospel.

One participant stated that this was the case, not only nationally, but around the world. Ordination was also identified as necessary to perform ministerial duties and functions, such as the as Lord's Supper, Baptism, Christenings, weddings, funerals. Relatedly, it was believed that ordination has a legal component because such events, like weddings, would not be considered official unless performed by an ordained minister, state law, state rule. This solidifies that there is no separation between church and state. Further, it begs the questions, "What authority does the government have in the subject matter of ordination and How does this authority impact the process"?

Looking back, at the onset of this chapter, I asked four key questions about perceived experienced obstacles and ordination processes for each participant. These questions concern the subjects/topics of obstacles; the call by God to preach and ordination; understanding of ordination and; the purpose of being ordained.

As seen in the responses divulged in the questionnaire, women have faced significant obstacles and issues like male dominance in the overall ordination process, (Males are in the position to determine if, when and who gets to be ordained), church politics (cliques and "Good Ole Boys Club/Network"), church tradition (not to ordain women), female jealousy and envy (Lay congregational female members and other Female ministers), male pastors' self-ascribed power and that ascribed to them by the

congregation, subjective requirements imposed based on, educational, experience, traditional rules, and practices, personal life events (illness of self or other family members, caregiver responsibilities, homelessness, domestic violence). I offer that, they have no voice in “if or when” they will be ordained and understand fully that the imposed requirements are established by man and not by God.

Additionally, women collectively seem to understand the process of ordination in similar ways. It is mutually agreed that God has already ordained them, therefore, it would not prevent them from preaching. However, they contend that it is needed to be accepted by peers and laypersons. Further, they expressed that it legitimizes them as ministers, pastors, and preachers locally, Nationally and Internationally. Overall, it is believed that ordination allows them access to people, places and things to which that they would otherwise not benefit.

Above all, their words attest to the ways in which they themselves have raised viable questions about the nature and purpose of the ordination process. For instance, they have recognized that if God has called them to preach, a way will be made for them to be ordained by man (even though not required by God). Delight in the Lord and God will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37.4). In the chapter that follows, I will consider their narratives/testimonies by asking my own reflective questions about what these women have shared. More specifically, I will consider the ways in which I was enlightened and surprised. Further, I will assess what I discovered, what I missed, where I need to go and what I now need to do.

Chapter 4 Analysis and Evaluation

What I discovered

I discovered that there were parallels between my hypotheses and the participants' responses in the identification of obstacles in the ordination. There was a mutual agreement that the following were contributing impediments to their ordination process:

- a. male preacher dominance (The Good Ole Boys' Club)
- b. lay females in the congregation
- c. other female ministers
- d. personal subjectivity
- e. church politics
- f. doctrinal rules, regulations, and practices
- g. tradition
- h. available resources and support

I also discovered that the issue of female ordination in the Black church does not exist in a vacuum. Its tentacles reach deeply into the crevices of social ills that have plagued Black people since the beginning of time. I was forced to acknowledge that the church is guilty of perpetrating the same prejudice and discrimination that existed in society against the "least of these". This same ugliness found its way into Christians and continues to have a stronghold in many Black churches. I am not so much surprised that there are challenges for Black female ministers seeking ordination, but I am appalled at the magnitude to which it exists.

I had to accept that I too am a victim of this circumstance. More importantly, I learned that I cannot let this circumstance silence my voice and I must be proactive in creating a space that will ensure that other female ministers' voices can be unsilenced. I am committed to making this happen through, Agape Christian Liberation Ministries, my newly planted church. I get overwhelmed when I think about the pervasiveness of the

issue and the amount of work and energy that it is going to take to remedy this problem. I accept that there is a chance that it will never be resolved completely. Even though there is the reality that it may never be totally “fixed”, I understand that efforts for change must be pursued. Also, my obligation to be an advocate is imperative. The goal of this project was to identify the challenges and obstacles that face Black female ministers’ quest for ordination. In pursuing knowledge in this area, yet other issues were surfaced. Yes, impediments continue to exist for that population, but, women who have already been ordained are also still struggling to do the work that God has called them to do.

Having recognized this, I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge that this problem has existed for many years and over those years, countless men and women, have worked and continue to do so to eliminate or minimize the problems that continue to plague the women in question. Support groups have been established for the purpose of providing support to Black female ministers. These groups include, but are not limited to the following:

Women of Color in Ministry Employment, Mentorship, Advocacy, and Educational Project (WOCIM). This group seeks to end prejudice and gender discrimination of the Christian Church
WomenofColorinMinistry@gmail.com

International Association of Women Ministries (IAWM). This group goal is to advocate for and celebrate the ordination of women in all areas of ministry
iawm-webeditor@womenministers.org

Network of Women Ministers (NWM) exists to connect and inspire credentialed women ministers, and those seeking credentials
womeninministry@ag.org
417.862.2781

National Consortium of Black Women in Ministry (NCBWIM). This organization is said to address “tangible, material” issues that affect women in ministry.
ncbwim@ncbwim.org
(847) 328-5649

There are a plethora of books and articles that have been written to provide needed support, resources, guidance, and encouragement. Most of this literature was based on their own or witnessed experiences. Some being as follows:

Brown-Fry, Teresa L. *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help: Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008.

S.L Barnes, "Whosoever Will Let Her Come: Social Activism and Gender Inclusivity in the Black Church." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45 (2006): 371-87. doi10.1111/j.1468-5906.200600312x

Smith, Christine A. *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2013

Barnes-Walker, Chaniqua. *Too Heavy a Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014.

What surprised me

I did not anticipate or consider that some of the obstacles would be those that were self-imposed or those imposed by those outside of the church. For example, the participants' responses revealed that self-doubt prevented progression or pursuance of answering God's call to preach and pursuance of ordination. Participants expressed that they did not have faith in themselves to take on the mantle. Some sited that they did not feel worthy of the calling to preach or to start the journey to ordination. It made me question if they doubted that they had been called by God to preach.

I was moved spiritually and emotionally and by the obstacles that were imposed by spouses, children, caregiving responsibilities for aging parents and circumstances such as homelessness and domestic abuse. Renita Weems is an ordained minister¹, well-

1. Renita J. Weems, *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey Through Silence and Doubt* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999).

known for her celebrated pioneering scholarship work in the field of the Old Testament. She shared that she experienced a profound spiritual crisis that included pain in her own life and was impacted by her responsibilities for children, spouses, caring for ailing parents, living up to professional expectations, managing finances, and planning for the future. I am in total agreement with Reem's contention that the challenge possibly lies in our struggle to listen for God's voice, in the midst of so many worldly demands and distractions.

I also questioned how much of this self-doubt, self-blame, and questions of worthiness was impacted or influenced by the lack of support, direction, guidance and encouragement from their male or female pastors. I was also surprised by the willingness of some of the participants to leave their churches or to change their denominations in pursuit of ordination. So often I have witnessed and even remained at a church for reasons that were not beneficial to me or my spiritual needs. Some of those reasons included my own personal attachment to tradition or ending my tenure with a church to which I had been a member for many years. I didn't want to leave my friends or end responsibilities for a Ministry or Ministries to which I had been assigned. I realize now, that I failed to distinguish my allegiance to the church from that to God. I was impressed with the actions that some of the participants took to liberate themselves, to increase their opportunities to become ordained. Their actions inferred that there was no question to whom their allegiance was assigned.

On the other hand, I was surprised to see that while some of the participants voiced obstacles and displeasure with the ordination process, they were still steeped in tradition. For example, they relied heavily on the approval of their male pastor to tell

them if they could be and when they would be ordained. They sought their acceptance, looked for their direction and support. They remained in that church for years, even though they received neither acceptance, direction, support or encouragement in their pursuit of ordination. One of the participants remained in her church for 10 years and remains there to this day, still waiting.

Last, but not least, I was surprised with how real the pain and frustration expressed in the narratives or testimonies of the Participants felt as they revealed their stories. The pain and frustrations were palpable, just as that of Jarena Lee. I could not only feel the discomfort, but I could also relate to it. Reliving the pain of my own ministerial experiences, I was drawn to Teresa L. Fry Brown² who so adequately spoke of the generated feelings of alienation, abandonment, and perplexity. In a strange way, this suffering serves to unify, us as women, still struggling to find our voices and places in this male-dominated arena.

As with other oppressive conditions, such as racism, sexism, and injustice I find myself asking “Where is God in all of this? Why is God allowing this pain and suffering to persist at the hands of those in power, those with the authority”? When I was growing up and into adulthood, I had been taught that it is taboo to question God, about anything. Sometimes the hurt, pain, and suffering are just too unbearable, and the forbidden questions must be asked.

2. Teresa L. Fry Brown, *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help?: Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), ix.

What I missed

The major thing that I missed was the experienced personal issues/events that served as obstacles in the response to God's calling, as well as, the ordination journey. Personal issues/events were not included in my list of hypothesized obstacles. Yet, now, it is so obvious how such circumstances could impede any progress forward. For example, Participant #6 revealed that she was facing homelessness, a victim of domestic abuse, caregiving of her parents, a diagnosis of cancer, a newborn baby and the care of her 2 small children. She faced one devastating obstacle after the next. Likewise, Participant #2 attributed her obstacles to her husband's development of Alzheimer's Disease which required much of her time as a caregiver.

I was reminded of the fact that people come to church broken, burdened with the pain of everyday life situations. I was reminded that the church should be a sanctuary, a place where people could find peace, comfort, love, support, and encouragement. Acknowledging and accepting this, I questioned, how can the church provide the related needs of the congregants if it does not provide the same for Black female leadership, primarily Black female ministers? As is often said, the culture of an environment trends down from the top. How can love, support encouragement, the positive attributes sought, be provided when what is experienced within the church mirrors the ills of society? What are those ills? Sadly, they include but are not limited to, social injustice, inequality, sexism, racism, classism, elitism and the abuse of power.

Unfortunately, it was not until the very end of this paper that I had an epiphany about the confusion and controversy that plagues ordination and the processes of ordination. It has already been established that God calls people to preach. God sets

people apart according to their gifts. I propose that the problems arise when men assume God's role in determining who should be called to preach. Further, when God's choices are not accepted or questioned, and man does the choosing based on his/her own reasons or agendas.

Does this open the door to subjectivity and the tradition? For example, every male, for generations was a preacher. Perhaps, the male pastor was an abuse of power. Was the candidate chosen by the pastor because he was bound by a promise made to dying, financially supportive congregant, to ordain his/her surviving son? If this hypothesis has any validity at all, then it stands to reason that the selections must be closely "judged and examined. In recognition of this understanding, it makes perfect sense to put a person through the rigors of the "ordination process". If someone says that they have been called by God to preach, why must that person be "judged" by man and forced to jump through hoops to prove their calling? It is most unfortunate, but I believe that the usurping or ignorance of God's choices for ministry may be a contributor to challenges/obstacles for Black female ministers.

What do I need to do?

This project has revealed to me that I must play a role in assisting women to become ordained. I must contribute to the elimination of pitfalls, and at the very least, make intentional efforts to minimize them. I plan to incorporate into my newly planted church, a process whereby, a woman can be ordained without jumping through the hoops of traditional ordination processes. As previously mentioned in this paper, I have no intention of trying to dismantle "tradition", but I am committed to developing alternatives to tradition. Based on my theory that once you have been called by God to preach and

you have accepted the call, you can be ordained (Figure 5). Neither am I negating the need for education. However, I am not proposing that formal education is necessary. I do believe that a practical, purposeful educational training program be developed. It should include, but not be limited to, Bible study, the Sacraments (The Lord's Supper, Baptisms and Christenings), how to officiate weddings, funerals, preach sermons and conduct Bible study and to teach (in general). The curriculum should also include Missionary Work and Evangelism. Direction, supervision, and guidance should be major components of the Ordination process (Figure 5).

This project has helped me to acknowledge my obligation and commitment to be a change agent in the matter of women's ordination. It has opened my eyes to the magnitude of the issue and its urgent need to be addressed. I fully understand, appreciate and agree with the concern for accountability in the model that I propose. It is my intent to build this construct into the model and practice in a way that does not generate bias or promote a judgmental entity. Further, it is important to note that the nuts and bolts of the model have not yet been worked out. It is still a work in progress. It is merely a template, an intended alternative to the existing gender biased, painful, frustrating, unfair, and male-skewed, traditional ordination process.

I must note that this study is limited in scope due to time constraints. I recognize that while this project focuses on Black female ministers in the Black Church, the problem is multicultural and multidenominational. Challenges and obstacles exist for women across many cultural and denominational divides. I analogize this problem to the "Me Too" movement, but for female preachers who seek ordination in this male-dominated, Patriarchal society. The process of ordinations is oftentimes oppressive,

racist, sexist and unjust. It is appalling to acknowledge this because my belief is that God, not man, should be at the center of this practice.

It is my hope and desire that this project will serve as a platform to raise the consciousness of male and female preachers alike to understand and accept that we are all made in God's image and that God does not gender assign the gift and right to preach the "Good News". I would also like to see this project serve as an incentive to explore ways in which to eliminate or minimize the obstacles identified. This project has revealed to me that I can help to remedy the challenges identified in this paper. Through my newly transplanted church, I can, with the help of God, create a space for the ordination of more female ministers. More specifically, I can incorporate the means whereby, obstacles, pain, frustration can be addressed. In general, I can help to eliminate or minimize the obstacles that impede their journey to ordination and encourage others to do the same. I can provide the much-needed and desired support that these women need to make their journey more pleasant and purposeful.

It would be more than an honor to join the ranks of other Black female ministers who have attempted to create options to increase opportunities for the ordination process either for themselves or for other Black ministers who seek it. It would be very gratifying to know that hurt, pain, and frustration is no longer associated with the ordination process of any man or woman in any culture or denomination.

Project Evaluation

Candidate's Self-Evaluation

The evaluation tool provided was difficult to use because it did not fit my ministry context well. My church is newly planted and is not currently brick and mortar. It was

designed to be more of a street ministry. All services are conducted via teleconference, and the participating people are not members of my church. The participants are not local participants, they call in from different states across the United States. In addition, my project is directed toward Ministers, more so, than the congregants. However, I contend that the subject matter of my project has the potential to benefit congregations. The L.A.C. Committee and I still used the evaluation form provided and adjusted it to our needs accordingly.

I prepared the L.A.C. for our meetings by preparing them with a comprehensive packet that included, but was not limited to: My IRB information, a list of their responsibilities and my Prospectus, which included my Statement of Purpose, Project goals and Introduction. Committee member, Carolyn Williams summed this up what happened in our meetings and my interaction with the committee in a nutshell: “There were weekly telephone calls, suggested readings and discussions about specific Black female ministers in the past and present who faced these obstacles. She also shared her own personal experiences deciding to become a minister, the ordination process and why she decided to ordain 2 female ministers in a non-traditional way.”

In addition, I availed myself to them via phone, email, and regular mail. To facilitate correspondence, when needed, I hard mailed and emailed materials, such as the L.A.C. Information Packet and Evaluation forms. I also provided stamped self-addressed envelopes for materials that I needed them to send me back.

I believe that my project reflected theological and Biblical soundness, was focused and understandable, had realistic goals, progressed timely, and has the potential to be meaningful to the ministry context and can evoke positive change in Ministry. I must admit that it was becoming increasingly difficult to stay focused and not be distracted. I attribute this to the fact that subject matter had so many related facets to it. I found myself thinking about the social ills that are an intrinsic part of the problems and challenges presented. I am referencing areas of social injustices, sexism, racism, oppression, classism, the impact of government, etc. Anyone of these areas could support

different projects that are separate and apart from mine. However, the L.A.C. and I managed to keep me on track.

Initially, I started out with 5 L.A.C. members, but due to circumstances beyond my control, I ended up with 3. The 3 that remained were invaluable to me and the project. They were committed and eager to work with me. I am very grateful for their unselfish sharing of time and their uninhibited willingness to ask questions and make suggestions. They even recommended readings to add to my project. They met often enough with me to complete the tasks, understood the project and its goals, stayed focus, shared decision making with me and kept to the specifications of the prospectus. They too, as I, initially had difficulty adapting the evaluation tool to my context, but we eventually made it work. Overall, the L.A.C members and I worked well together, and they worked well with each other.

Local Advisory Committee's Evaluation (Feedback)

I am so pleased with the encouragement, support, and input from the members of my local advisory committee (L.A.C.). Their commitment and investiture of me and my project were evident from the inception of their agreement to participate. They helped to keep me focused and uplifted throughout the completion of this project. They unselfishly availed themselves to me for site visits which were scheduled with their precious time in mind, as well as, any other discussions that I deemed necessary. I am more than grateful for their honest and thought-provoking evaluation feedback shared in this portion of the paper. It is obvious that they spent time reading through and digesting their responses before writing committing them to pen and paper.

I met with the L.A.C. on 2/19/2019 and 2/26/2019 (Site Visit with Dr. Kendall). A final meeting is scheduled for 4/16/2019 to provide as a closeout meeting and to discuss the project updates and outcomes. This meeting will also serve as an exit meeting. They all agree that they were aware of the nature and scope of my project, that they read the prospectus and understood the purposes, goals, and ministries proposed in

the Prospectus. They did express and I agree that they had to adapt some of the questions and responses to my particular context. The tool focused more on the experiences that occurred in a traditional church setting.

Responses to Question # 5 on the Evaluation Form: “What is your overall evaluation of the project and the impact and of the impact this it is making on the candidate, the committee, and the ministry?”

Committee member, Carolyn Williams: “My overall evaluation of the project is that it was both subjective and objective. Rev. Veronica is in the ministry and has had first-hand experience of the obstacles and challenges faced by Black women ministers. She has been a participant in a traditional ordination service and has presided over a non-traditional ordination service. An unknown person once said, ‘take small steps every day and one day you will get there’. Rev. Veronica’s steps were bringing attention to this matter. It has given food for thought, not only for female ministers but prayerfully to those males who are usually in authority roles in the Black church”.

Committee member Dianna Mosley’s response to that same evaluation question was as follows: “The project raises awareness for change in the church and community to embrace an issue that has been plagued by gender bias and power status for too long in the Black church. This project will encourage and expand those pastors who said they were called by God to serve in His vineyard when he told them to go out into the world to teach and preach the Gospel. Remember a lot of pastors are not a Jarena Lee. Unlike her, they would get discouraged easily if not “ordained” in a “Traditional Ordination”. They would be discouraged and seek resolution in another denomination. This project gives them hope to know that there are other alternatives to Traditional Ordinations.”

Committee member Rev. James B. Barnwell, III expressed that: “The project has shed light on the challenges of women of color seeking ordination in the Black church. The committee was enlightened by the fact that a female-dominated congregation can place a lot of pressure on the pastor not to ordain a minister because of gender bias. This project shows how the ministry can be impacted in a negative manner, by preventing

gifted women ministers from being ordained”. In addition, the candidate has been very thorough in educating the committee by showing historical examples of women ministers that were refused ordination based on their gender, an example being Jarena Lee. It is a known fact that she was never ordained, while she was living, in the A.M.E. Church denomination because she was a woman. However, as Rev. Veronica revealed in her paper, she was eventually ordained posthumously in 2016”.

Carolyn stated that “Rev. Veronica had supportive biblical scriptures about ordination and what it meant to be ordained by God. There were weekly telephone calls, suggested readings and discussions about specific Black female ministers in the past and present who faced these obstacles. She also shared her own personal experiences deciding to become a minister, the ordination process and why she decided to ordain 2 female ministers in a non-traditional way.”

Diana expressed that, “Rev. Veronica demonstrated the potential benefits of the Project for the life and Ministry of her potential congregation (She has a newly planted church): “She provided a strong analytical foundation why the project will work for the life and ministry of her potential congregation. All committee members agreed that Rev. Veronica has guided and stayed engaged with the Committee’s work process.

Diana, Carolyn, and Rev James B. Barnwell, III agreed that the project was a good and meaningful project with realistic goals, theological soundness, has the potential for ministry context and strong positive possibilities for change for female ministers in the Black church and beyond. Also, they agreed that the goals were met enough to complete the tasks, that Rev. Veronica stayed focused and shared decision making with the committee. They also felt that she kept to the specifications of the Prospectus.

The committee felt that Rev. Veronica presented the project well, worked collaboratively with the committee, demonstrated interpersonal process skills, listened to, accepted and processed criticism and feedback well, was open to guidance from the committee and supported the committee’s work with guidance, pastoral friendship, and prayer.

Once again, I thank each committee member for her/his participation, love, support, guidance, and input throughout this journey.

Editorial Response by Linda Johnson

March 31, 2019

Dear Veronica,

First, I am so honored to have been given the privilege to read your dissertation, “Challenges Posed by Traditional Ordination Processes for Female Ministers in the Black Church and an Exploration of Alternatives.”

As a modern woman with conventional beliefs, raised as a Methodist and baptized Baptist, what you have chosen to write about, is truly relevant to women of all walks of life. What I found compelling, among so many things you talk about, is how the ordination process has become more a like a job interview for seeking a profession, when in fact I always thought preaching was simply, a calling. And the qualities the church leadership was looking for were values more intrinsic and organic to one’s spiritual acumen, integrity, and faith!

I too am taking a spiritual journey, *on my own*, because, of the many barriers I’ve always felt were there, trying to fit into a congregation, but just couldn’t understand what was wrong with *me*. And, subsequently, just knew in my heart, they, the leadership were completely out of touch, especially to the needs of the wonderfully, complex woman that I am (smile)! Listen, I said to myself, I have a college degree, I can read the Bible, myself! I am so wonderfully blessed and amazed at how much peace and comfort I gain from reading scripture!

Being baptized Baptist, was only because I wanted to get married in the Baptist church. So, I know about the rules that plague membership and the moral cost we give to feel completely whole and validated. And, in my case, for my marriage to be legitimately sanctioned by the church, and God. Who makes up these rules anyway?

I know that some say patience is a virtue. My goodness, when I think about one of the women you write about, who has been waiting over 10 years to be ordained! Her demonstrative loyalty to this church, should on its face be enough to prove her commitment and worthiness of this honor. Ok. Here’s another question; who deems any of us worthy?

I mean, I could go on about so many questions you have posed and matters that you have brought into the light. Significantly, how women are predominantly the Black Church membership, and how small-minded the patriarchal leadership, and reticent to include and in this case, ordain a woman to co-commandeer the ship. To me, it simply is a no brainer. Think of the possibilities!

And, as your sister, we have the luxury to continue this debate, freely, without end and judgment. Since I believe this obsession for ordination, has many parallels to Nursing, and how once upon a time, it to, was also, considered a calling.

In my opinion, first, one must have their own personal relationship with God. How this is measured and qualified is beyond my ability to comprehend. And, it is imperative for us to use the intellect God has given us; specifically, to treat our fellow man and woman alike, free from bias, racism, and sexism.

That being said, again, I am humbled, and so honored to write a reactionary response to this body of work. And I appreciate, the magnitude of hard work and effort it must have taken to birth this baby.

Well done!

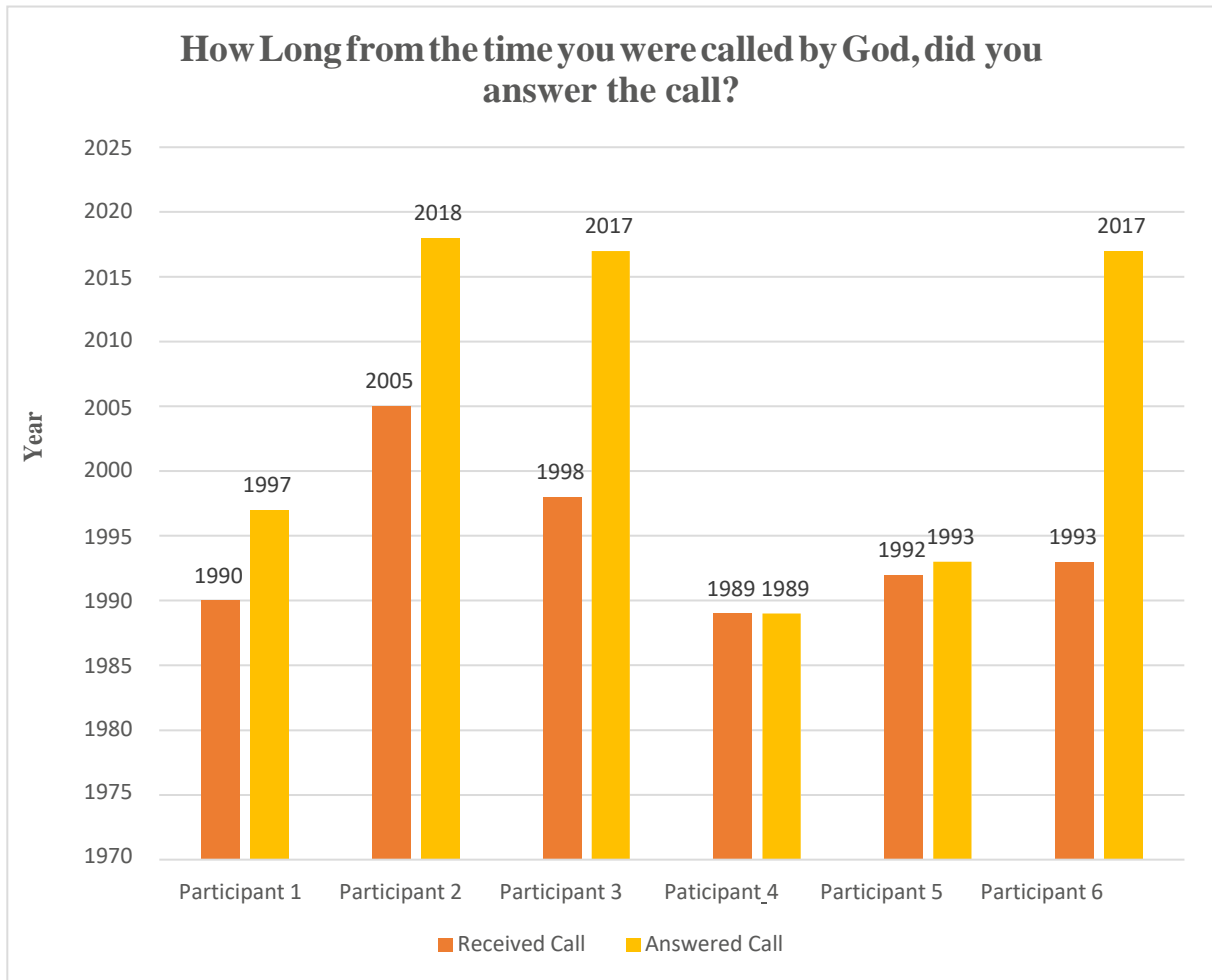
Respectfully,

Linda

Johnson, RN

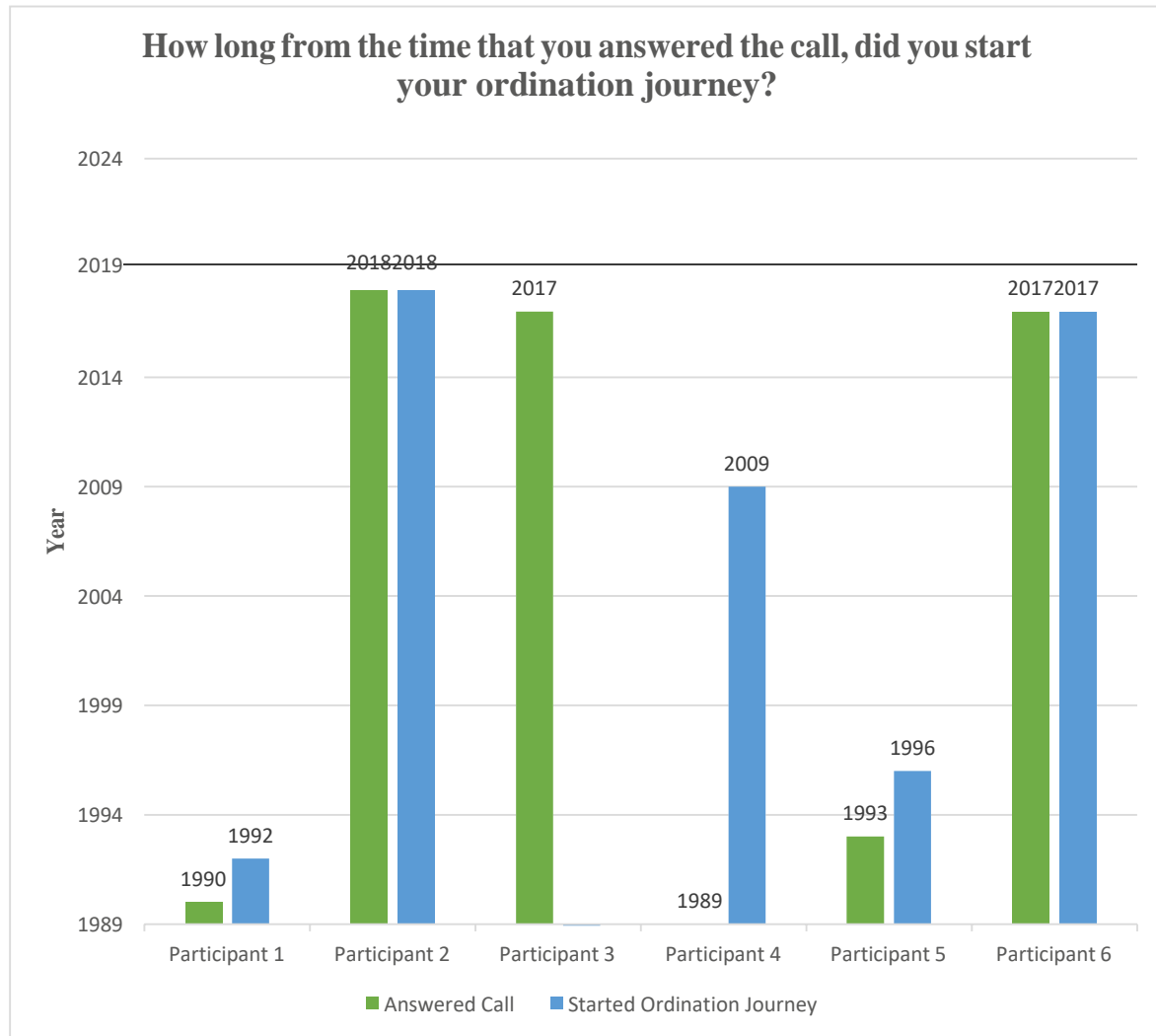
APPENDIX A

Figure 1



APPENDIX B

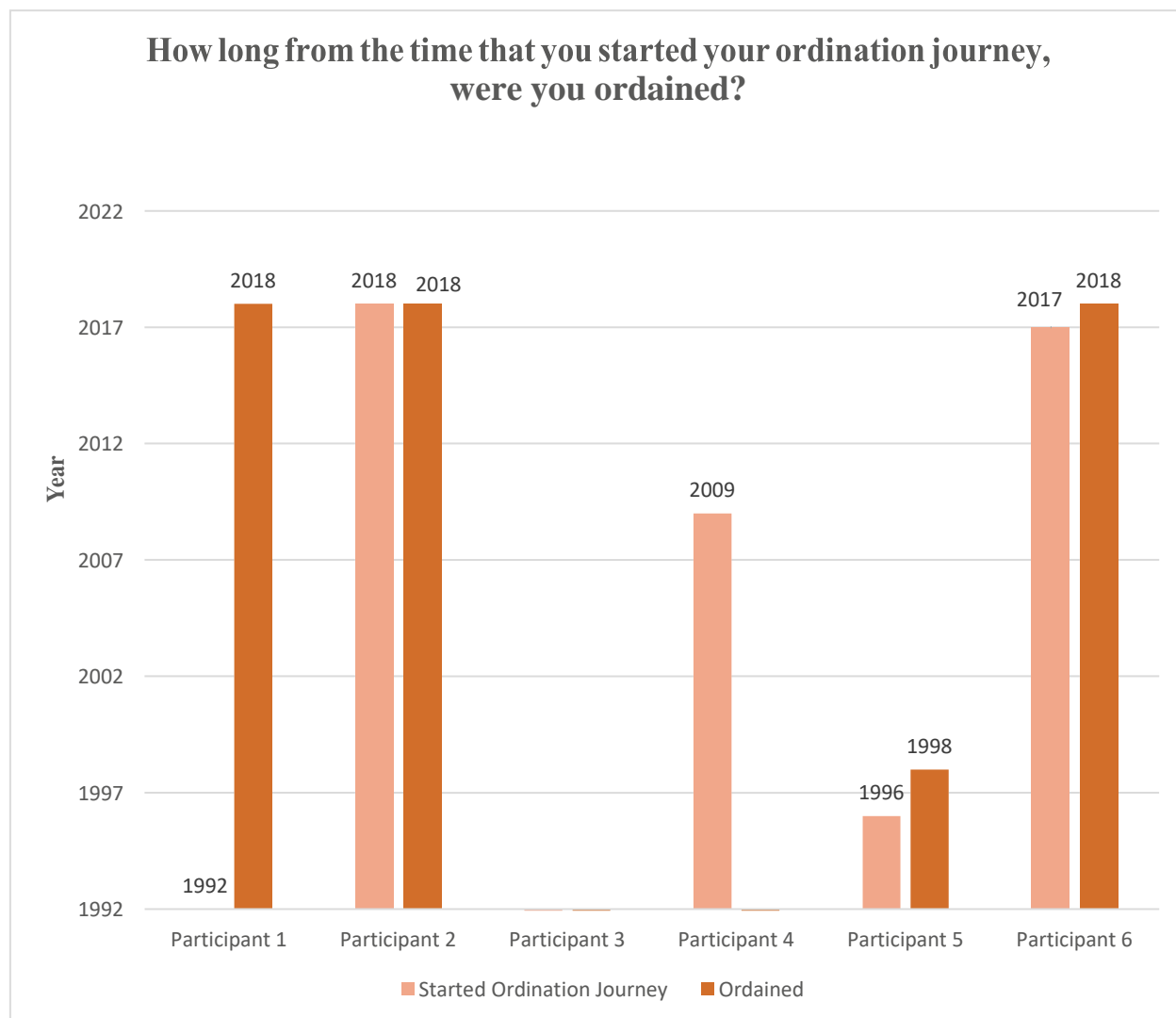
Figure 2



Note: Participant # 3 never started her ordination journey

APPENDIX C

Figure 3



Note: (1) Participant # 3 never started her ordination journey and has not yet been ordained

(2) Participant # 4 started her ordination journey 10 years ago, but has not yet been ordained

Figure 4

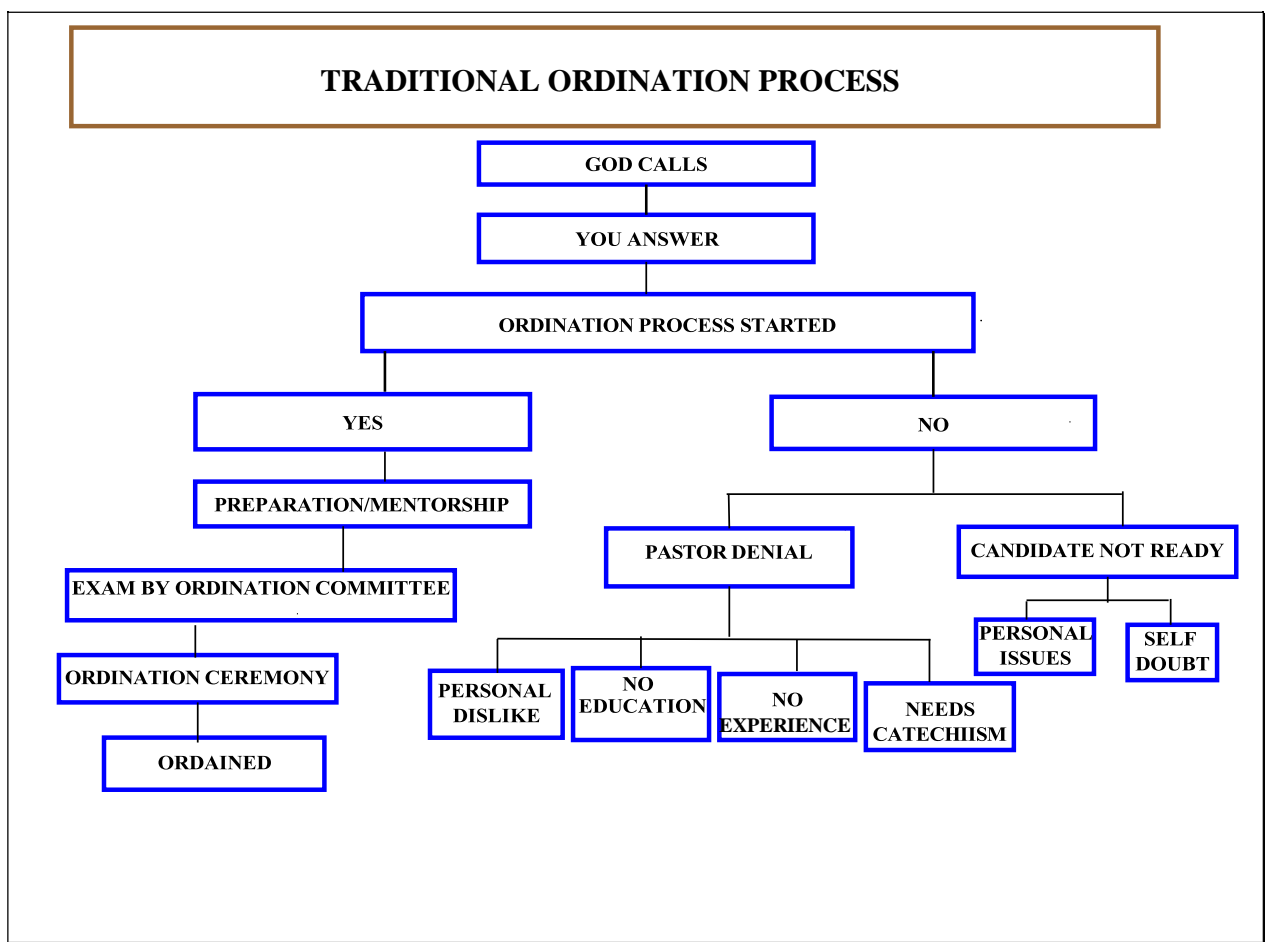
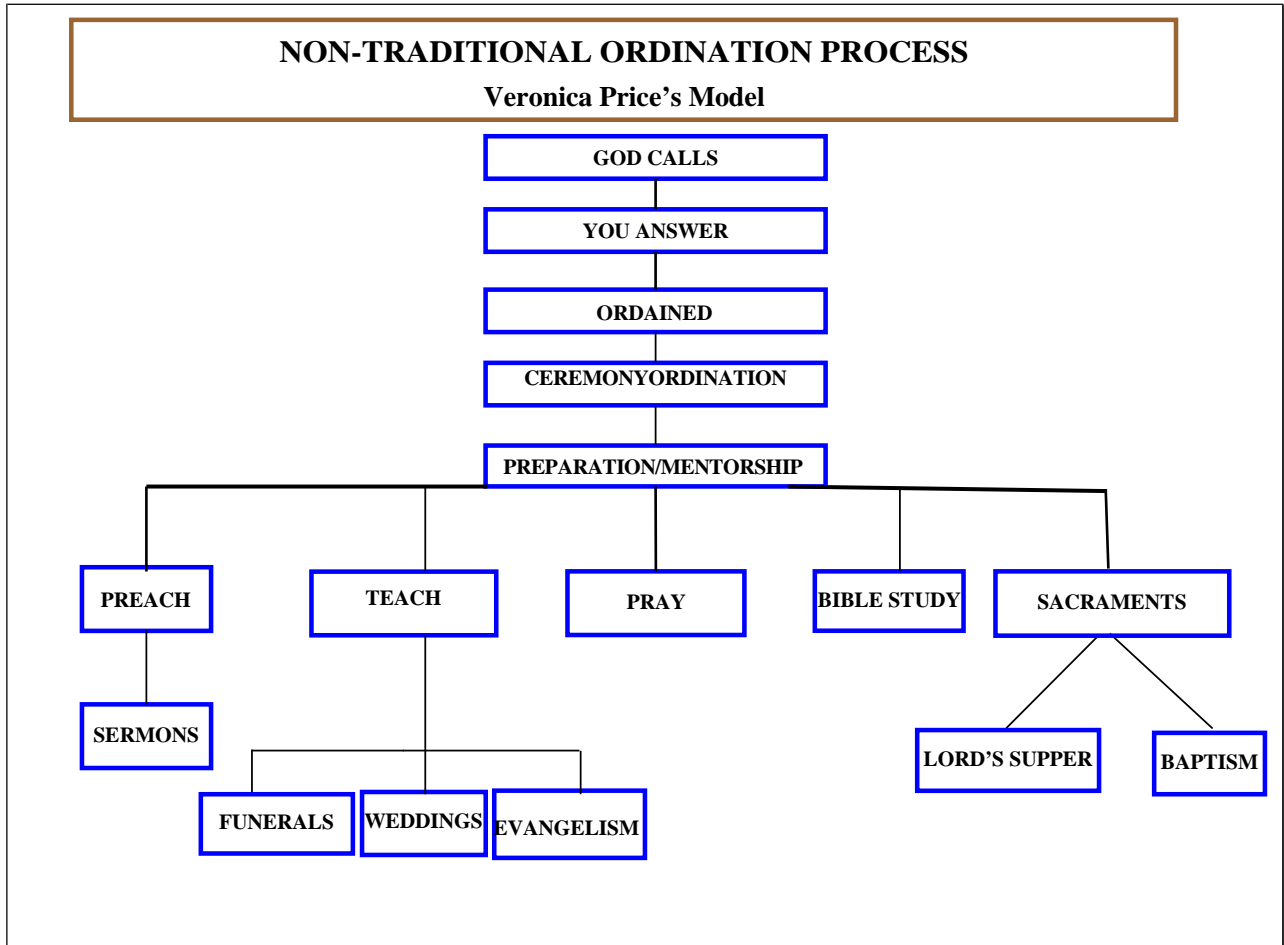


Figure 5



DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT TIMELINE

#	TASK	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION	DATE OF APPROVAL
1	Prospectus/Bibliography	11/1/18	
2	IRB Documents	11/1/18	
3	Questionnaire Completion (data collection)	11/30/18	
4	Chapter 3	2/28/2019	
5	Chapters 4	3/3/2019	
6	Chapter 2	3/11/2019	
7	Chapter 1	3/20/19	
8	Submit Graduation App.	4/15/19	

Appendix G

Informed Consent Form

Introduction

My name is Veronica Price, and I am a student at Drew University's Theological School conducting a comparative analysis study for the completion of the Doctor of Ministry program. My email address is vprice@drew.edu. My Project Advisor is Dr. Susan Kendall and her email address is Skendall@drew.edu. You may contact either of us at any time if you have questions about this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to identify obstacles and challenges that hinder or impede Black female ministers' road to ordination by way of "traditional processes" and to explore alternatives to those processes. The goal is to explore alternatives/options for Black female ministers seeking ordination that may circumvent the obstacles of traditional ordination processes.

Procedure

A questionnaire will be dispersed to each participant. The questionnaire, with instructions, will either be emailed, manually mailed or hand-delivered (by me) to the participating subjects no later than 11/17/2018 with a request for its return to me at 1276 Jackson Street Camden, NJ 08104 no later than 11/30/2018. For those to whom the questionnaire will be manually mailed, a stamped self-addressed envelope will be provided. This mailing will include instructions to freely contact me on my cell phone (856-426-1759) or email (vprice@drew.edu) should any questions or concerns arise.

Time Required

It is estimated that it will take anywhere from 1-2 hours to complete the questionnaire. However, time is subjective. However, my only stipulation is that the completed questionnaire be returned to me no later than 11/30/2018. Each subject will be allotted approximately 2 weeks to return the completed questionnaire.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any questions that cause you discomfort. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.

Risks

There are no known physical risks associated with this interview. However, it is possible that you might feel some anxiety as you reflect on your journey through or in your journey to get to the ordination process. If this happens, please inform me immediately. You may stop the interview at any time with no consequences or negative judgment from me.

Benefits

I contend that the benefits would be for female ministers across all denomination lines and would serve best in the categories of social justice with support and encouragement of female ministers everywhere. This includes those who are on the ordination path, as well as, those who are already ordained by way of a “traditional” or “non-traditional process”. I believe that my study speaks to society at large because it is a reminder that we still live in a double, perhaps multi-standard world which still supports the suppression of women, especially minority women. It is daunting to realize and even more to witness that this situation has found a secure, but questionable place in churches of all denominations. I believe my study will give hope to those who believe that they have received and answered the call to preach. In addition, it is possible that my work will stir the conscience of those who can make a difference in women’s desires and rights to answer that call and to be ordained.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

Each questionnaire will be numbered. A correlating number will be assigned to each subject’s name. I will be the only one with access to the key that connects the questionnaire with the actual subject’s name. At no time, will your name be divulged or associated with the data obtained, thereby assuring that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained? This includes during the reporting and writing phases of this project.

Sharing the Results

I plan to do a comparative analysis of the data collected from each of the 6 chosen subjects based on the completed questionnaires. Upon the completion of my research, the resulting project will be submitted to my academic advisors. In addition, I plan to share my study with female ministers across all denominational lines and with anyone that will endeavor to increase the seats at the ordination table for female ministers.

Publication

If there is a possibility that this study will be published or that I refer to it in published writing in the future, I will continue to maintain confidentiality and maintain your anonymity.

Before You Sign

Understand that by signing below, you agree to complete a questionnaire that has been constructed to extract pertinent data. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your satisfaction. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you.

Statement of Consent

The procedures of this study have been explained to me and my questions have been addressed. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. If I have concerns about my experience in this study (e.g. that I was treated unfairly or felt unnecessarily threatened), I may contact the Chair of the Drew Institutional Review Board regarding my concerns.

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Print Name:

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name:

Appendix H

Questionnaire for Black Female Ministers

NOTE: Thank you for participating in my Doctor of Ministry Final Project. Please answer all questions completely and as honestly as possible. All information will be held in confidence. Your anonymity is assured. Only I, Veronica Price, will know your identity. Your name will not be associated with any of the data that I collect from this questionnaire.

Please print or type your responses to the questions below:

1. Age Range:

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70+

2. Denomination:

A.M.E.

C.O.G.I.C.

Baptist

Pentecostal

Holiness

Other (Specify): _____

3. What year did you receive God's call to preach? _____

4. What year did you answer God's call to preach? _____

5. What obstacles (if any) delayed you from answering God's call to preach

- 6. What year did you start your ordination journey? _____
- 7. Are you currently ordained? Yes _____ No _____
- 8. If Yes, what year were you ordained? _____
- 9. What obstacles (if any) hindered or slowed up your path to ordination?

- 10. Are/Were you satisfied with your ordination process? Yes _____ No _____
- 11. If Yes, explain (be specific)

- 12. If No, explain (be specific)

- 13. What changes would you make to the ordination process that you have experienced or are experiencing?

14. Why is it important for you to be

ordained? _____

15. What does ordination have to do with you preaching the Gospel?

Please return the completed questionnaire to me no later than 11/30/2018. Its timely return is of utmost importance.

Contact Information: Please feel free to contact me with any questions about this questionnaire.

Veronica L Price
1276 Jackson Street
Camden, New Jersey
Vprice@drew.edu
(856) 426-1759

Once again, I thank you for your participation and cooperation God

Bless You!

Appendix I

Debriefing Form

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to identify obstacles and challenges that hinder or impede Black female ministers' road to ordination by way of "traditional processes" and to explore alternatives to those processes. The goal is to explore alternatives/options for Black female ministers seeking ordination that may circumvent the obstacles of traditional ordination processes.

Methodology

I plan to address this area of the project by utilizing a 15-item questionnaire. My sample size will be a total of 6 subjects. 2 of these subjects will be female ministers who are seeking to become ordained. 2 subjects will be females who have already become ordained by way of a "traditional process" and 2 will be Ministers who were ordained by way of a "non-traditional" process.

Additional Resources

If you are a Black Female minister in search of support and encouragement in your calling, regardless of denomination, I recommend the following resources:

Can a Sistah Get a Little Help? Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry, by Teresa L. Fry Brown. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008.

Women in Ministry: Challenging the Cultural Obstacles by Lee M. Haines
Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850-1979 by Brett Collier Thomas.

Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel, by Jarena Lee. Philadelphia: Pantianos Classics, 1836.

This is My Story: Testimonies and Sermons of Black Women in Ministry, Edited by Cleophus J. LaRue. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.

Contact Information

If you are interested in learning more about this research or the results of the research study of which you were a part, please do not hesitate to contact me, Veronica Price at yprice@drew.edu or my Project Advisor, Dr. Susan Kendall at skendall@drew.edu.

Thank you for your participation in this study

Appendix J

DREW

Institutional Review Board G. Scott Morgan
Drew University Chair, IRB
36 Madison Avenue Associate Professor
Madison, New Jersey 07940 smorgan@drew.edu

November 5, 2018

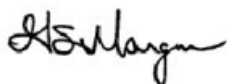
Ms. Price and Dr. Kendall:

The Institutional Review Board has conducted a full review of your research for the project entitled “Challenges Posed by Traditional Ordination Processes for Female Ministers in the Black Church and an Exploration of Alternatives.” The IRB has approved your research.

This approval for your research protocol and the human participants’ component of your work is valid through 5-November-2019. If you plan to continue data collection for this research past this date, you will need to reapply for IRB approval. If you make any modifications to your research, you will need to obtain IRB approval for those changes as well.

Best of luck with your work!

Sincerely,



G. Scott Morgan
IRB Chair

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